

Inattentive readings

Peter Winch

RENÉ GIRARD
The Scapegoat
Translated by Yvonne Freccero
216pp. Athlone. £29.95.
0485 113066
DAVID RICHES (Editor)
The Anthropology of Violence
232 pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.
0631 147888

One of the most distorting prejudices of twentieth-century intellectual life is the conviction that *explaining why* things are as they are is the most fundamental category of human understanding, rather than one category amongst others, the relative importance of which shifts from context to context. This prejudice plays havoc, for example, with many aesthetic inquiries; but also with our attempts to understand various aspects of social and cultural life. In particular it distracts attention from the importance and difficulty of understanding what something is, rather than why it has come into and persisted in existence. Very broadly speaking, the value of the contributions in these two books varies in direct proportion to the extent to which they pay attention to that first question of "being".

Paying attention, a notion central to the thought of Simone Weil, is of the essence here. It involves letting the individual case speak for itself and not imposing one's own favourite preconceptions on it. As René Girard wisely says, "If you try too hard to prove something you prove nothing". He directs the remark against all those critics, the "ethnologists", the "positivistic philologists", etc., in relation to whom Girard is more than inclined to cast himself in the role of scapegoat: a manic version of Cassaubon's hatred of his enemies at Brasenose. It is amazing that he never thinks of considering his own procedures in the light of his remark.

His method is to set up as a model of a "persecution text" the opening of the fourteenth-century poem "Judgment of the King of Navarre" by Guillaume de Machaut, an account of a massacre of Jews accused of causing a catastrophic epidemic (presumably the Black Death) by poisoning the wells. Girard articulates very skillfully how Machaut's text unconsciously falsifies the true nature of the events it describes because he shares the persecutory delusions of those who perpetrated the massacre. Girard also claims that though "we are all able today to recognize the stereotypes of persecution" in such texts, this would not have been so in earlier centuries. This strikes me as already a bit tall if one thinks, for instance, of a writer like Thucydides and the kind of readership such a work as his *Peloponnesian War* presupposed. But more importantly, Girard claims that we too are in this latter position in relation to other familiar texts, those falling under the rubric of "mythology", which, he thinks, can only be understood if they are seen as describing in a more or less veiled way actual acts of communal violence from the point of view of the persecutors themselves.

This is a striking thesis and it might be interesting if it could be explored in a serious way. But the conviction of having the Key to all Mythologies and the feverish determination to defend this, come what may, against the hosts of the enemy is as damaging to such serious exploration in Girard's case as it was in poor Cassaubon's. He speaks for instance of this persecution drama as being what "statistically dominates world mythology" without revealing the nature of the statistical evidence and calculation which leads him to this (to me implausible) view. And thirty pages later he has abandoned even the remnants of caution implied by "statistically" and declares (complete with italics): "I have tried to show that this drama is true of all myth". Lévi-Strauss is reprimanded, with incrediblechutzpah, for refusing to consider "that men might not always think in exactly the same way". Girard himself does not confine his claims to mythology but claims that his theory provides "what must be called a scientific solution to man's greatest enigmas, the nature and origins of religion". But in fact his treatment of his myth is so

inattentive that he does not even stop to consider the conceptual importance of the fact that, in many instances at least, they concern gods, rather than men. All this is a pity, because when his grand theory is not in question, Girard can be illuminating about the texts he considers.

The contributions to David Riches's collection exhibit the same phenomenon: their contribution to one's understanding varies inversely with their commitment to a uniform theoretical account of violence. This is at its strongest in the case of the editor himself, who thinks we should regard human violence as "a strategically, consciously employed resource" rather than as "biologically innate or as imprinted in the human consciousness". Or we should suppose that these are the only, or even the most important, alternatives he does not explain; neither does he seriously consider the possibility that there is no single "phenomenon of violence" to which such an account might be applied. This is the more remarkable in that the volume as a whole seems to point inexorably to just such a conclusion, covering as it does such a wide variety of quite different cases: Spanish insurrections, Spanish bullfights, the "troubles" in Northern Ireland, football hooliganism, "invisible" (ie, quasi-magical) violence in Cameroon, the use of the idea of "cannibalism" in explanations of disease among a jungle people of Venezuela, the portrayal of violence in *Jidaigeki* and *yakuzo* films in Japan, ritual circumcision in Uganda,

Safety factors

Paul Seabright

MARY DOUGLAS
Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences
115pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. Paperback, £7.95.
07102 11082

Can the social sciences offer us either a convincing account of how people respond to the different kinds of risk they face in their lives, or an acceptable normative theory of how individuals and societies ought to respond to them? The need for both is indisputable. Most interesting social phenomena, from religion to fertility to investment behaviour to war, are profoundly shaped by perceptions of risk. And social and scientific change has seen the emergence of unfamiliar kinds of risk, such as those involved in new technologies or in nuclear defence. We need to know how to respond to these, the more so since we have increasing reason to doubt whether our instinctive responses serve us well.

The most rigorous and ambitious account of risk is the theory of expected utility maximization, deployed chiefly in economics. It uses the austere logic of the probability calculus and assumes that all prospects faced by an individual are evaluated on a single scale, that of utility. Choices are made to maximize the sum of the utilities of the various possible outcomes, weighted by their probabilities of occurrence. Differences between individuals and between different predicaments of the same individual, if not due to accidental and therefore temporary misperception of the probabilities, must be ascribed to differences in utility yielded by the prospects. There is thus no room for what we might call "cultural context-dependence": the possibility that choices are affected not just by the degree of intrinsic riskiness but also by the kind of risk: by whether it is undertaken in the course of work or of leisure, whether it is voluntarily or involuntarily borne, whether information concerning it is freely available or secretly guarded, whether society wishes to discourage its members from undertaking it (as in some forms of gambling) or to encourage it (as in military service or in the offering of gambling such as Premium Bonds). The rigour of decision theory is won at the price of great cultural asceticism.

There has long been a need for a detailed study of risk perception, especially by a distinguished anthropologist who could combine the insights of decision theory with the richer but more fragmentary findings of the direct study

of human culture. Unfortunately, this book is not it. It is vitiated by technical errors and misrepresentations of major theories, and its coverage even as a review of current literature on the subject is at best idiosyncratic and at worst confusing. There is, for example, a major technical error in Mary Douglas's report of a well-known gambling problem called the St Petersburg Paradox. "A fair coin is tossed until a head appears; then the game stops. The player is paid two ducats for every toss." In the correct version of the game, the player is paid 2ⁿ (two to the power n) ducats if the game continues for n throws; the mathematically expected value of such a gamble is infinite, and the "paradox" — if such it is — is why people are prepared to pay only finite, and usually very small amounts to take it. Professor Douglas's version of the game — two ducats per throw — has an expected value that is not only not infinite but is a mere four ducats, thus eviscerating the paradox and making her ensuing discussion unintelligible to anyone who does not already know the true version. To make matters worse, anyone turning for help to an article described as having been published in 1969 and "summarizing the immense literature on the paradox" will have a low probability of finding it, since it was actually published in 1950, and the volume and page numbers quoted refer to a different article altogether.

Misrepresentations include the following definition of egalitarianism: "An egalitarian system holds that the well-being of society is measured by the well-being of the worst-off person in that society, a notion that would lead to a totally egalitarian distribution of utility (Rawls 1971)". In fact Rawls's theory is about the distribution not of utility but of primary goods, and is distinguished from strict egalitarianism by allowing departures from it when these are to the benefit of the worst-off member. Holding that Rawls's theory is strongly egalitarian in its implications is reasonable; so is treating it as a definition of one among several possible conceptions of equality; using it to define egalitarianism, *tout court*, is not.

As a survey of the current literature on risk, this book is eccentric partly for what it includes. A discussion of the common human tendency to underestimate risks is followed by a speculation about the adaptive value of over-confidence, and a reference to "Drivers 1972". The reference is to Richard Trivers's famous 1971 article on the evolution of reciprocal altruism. But that article makes no mention of over-confidence, or misperceptions of probability, and its relevance to them is obscure.

Risk Acceptability According to the Social Sciences is more seriously eccentric for what it omits. What is one to make of a survey of

how difficult this sort of thing is, even in relation to concepts and institutions that are very familiar to us, does little to promote one's confidence in his account of the "metaphysical ideas" (the term is unexplained) said to be involved in the Kenyan Gikuyu conception of a "bad death".

It is a relief to turn to David McKnight's wonderfully vivid, incisive account of the extraordinary fighting habits of his aboriginal tribes in northern Australia. This seems to exemplify in a very high degree what Simone Weil meant by "attention". It shows how much more our understanding may be enhanced by the right sort of description of the material than by application of grandiose explanatory theories.

The same point is brought out in a different way by the alert piece from Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy and John Williams. Their discussion of "Football Hooligan Behaviour" divided into two parts, in the first of which the phenomena are described and in the second (tentatively) explained. The description in the first part already achieves a great deal in the way of increasing our understanding of what is going on; and the second part turns out to be fundamentally different in its meaning but to consist of more description: this time of the wider context in which the perpetrators of spectator violence live the lives previously described. Moderately attentive readers of this review will realize that I do not intend this as a criticism.

decision theory that fails to distinguish between the work of von Neumann and Morgenstern (which took objective probabilities as given and used them to define utility) and the work of Ramsey, Savage and others, which treated probabilities as subjective and defined them jointly with utilities (Savage's classic *Foundations of Statistics* does not appear in the bibliography.) How is one to react to the claim that the experimental violations of the so-called independence axiom reported by Maurice Allais in the early 1950s as the last word on the inadequacies of decision theory, when no mention is made of the work of Mark Machina in axiomatizing decision theory without that very axiom? There has been some useful work in testing, for example by Hans Binswanger in India, and some of the results support Douglas's criticisms. But readers will have to look elsewhere for discussion of this work.

The effect of the omissions (of which there are only a few) is to cast doubt on the reliability of her criticisms: she claims, for instance, that "expert risk analysis takes as its decision-making unit the individual or political feedback from the choice any moral or political feedback that he may be receiving from his surrounding society". Now on the face of it this is certainly false, in that decision theory claims to cope with this feedback by redescribing the possible outcomes. It may be true in a subtler sense, in that such redescription may fail to do justice to the task required. But it is hard to feel confident that this more subtle criticism is the one intended.

Many of the book's explanations serve only to confuse. For example: one proffered alternative to expected utility maximization is known as the "safety-first" approach, and suggests that people typically seek to ensure themselves some minimum threshold level of security before consciously taking on risk. Douglas correctly points out that this is a form of "satisficing" rather than maximizing behaviour; but she does not explain what form, and then gives some examples (such as diversification — putting your eggs in several baskets) that are no more than ordinary examples of risk aversion and are entirely compatible with expected utility maximization.

In spite of tantalizing glimpses of important ideas about the intrinsic connection between responses to risk and moral principles governing blame and legitimacy, this book is so haphazardly organized to allow these ideas to be sustained. Mary Douglas could surely give us a solid, critique of social scientific approaches to risk; the present book is more like a hurried first draft.

A tale of weal and woe

Barry Supple

HERMAN VAN DER WEE
Prosperity and Upheaval: The world economy 1945-1980
Translated by Robin Hogg and Max R. Hall
621pp. Viking. £20.
0670 808601

The problems of writing contemporary history are peculiarly intense in matters of economics — where everybody's life is the object of generalization, and where individual experiences are overwhelmingly different. Consider, for example, Britain in the early 1980s: for whom and in what ways is it related to the Britain of the depressed 1930s? How can we balance the elements of decline against the unprecedentedly high real incomes, or the collapse of old industries against the rise of new services? Can we really even begin to guess what it will all look like from the perspective of 2087?

Such problems are obviously eased when we grapple with longer periods and more general issues; but they still handicap the economic historian, and are exacerbated by the deficiencies of economic theory even in explaining uncontroverted facts. We must therefore be correspondingly grateful when someone with Herman Van der Wee's breadth of learning is audacious enough to present a wide-ranging conspectus of world economic history since the Second World War.

The story told in *Prosperity and Upheaval* is an astonishing one. Post-war economic development was unparalleled. Throughout the 1950s and 60s virtually all the world's economies grew more rapidly than during any comparable period in previous history. Between 1953 and 1980 the international output of manufactures quintupled and trade therein rose ninefold. Obviously, precise experiences differed: against the annual increase in Gross National Product of 2.5-4 per cent in the United Kingdom and the USA must be set the 5-6 per cent of France and West Germany, the 6-7 per cent of Italy and Greece, and the 10 per cent of Japan. But few important countries did not participate in the new affluence.

More than this, the benefits of that expansion were more widely shared than ever before. In the past two decades, industrialization — as the coalfields, motor-car industries and "rubber" of Britain and the United States has now — has intensified in the developed West and Japan, and spread decisively to South Korea and Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, Brazil and Portugal and Spain. The northern rim of the Pacific, like the northern rim of the Mediterranean, is being transformed. It follows, of course, that the relative living standards of different countries have changed rapidly (with humiliating results for once-proud Britain — its average income, although still growing — now overtaken by Japan, France and Italy, and threatened by Spain) but all have enjoyed, and on the whole still enjoy, increasing prosperity. Grinding poverty still exists, even in affluent countries; but on a very broad view, from the 1950s throughout large parts of the world, the succulent fruits of affluence (whether private, in the form of improved access to food, clothing, housing, leisure, transport and household goods, or public, in terms of the provision of education, health and social services) have been very widely spread.

Nor has this been all. After the vicissitudes of the 1930s and 40s, there appeared to be a dramatic — even miraculous — reduction in economic instability. The trade cycle no longer hounded millions of people into worklessness; the international economy appeared to operate with beneficent harmony. Altogether, by the mid-1960s it did not take an inordinate measure of complacency to assume that some of mankind's most pressing economic problems might have been definitively solved.

Such hubris received its just reward after the monetary dislocations and the oil-price crises of the 1970s. Bewilderingly, inflation, stagnation and unemployment seemed suddenly incompatible. Economic self-confidence in America, the certainty of affluence in Britain, the promise of social stability founded on continued prosperity — all began to recede. But it was also clear that the emergent problems were

not solely the result of exogenous shocks to an otherwise healthy system. In many countries unemployment appeared endemic, and familiar Keynesian solutions too hazardous to try; older industries and populations under economic pressure clamoured for protection, and social welfare and material efficiency seemed increasingly at odds; "structural" tensions (rapid changes in the relative prosperity of different industries and trades, abrupt alterations in currency values and exchange rates) threatened stability in domestic economies and internationally; and within a relatively short space of time, the world turned out to be a much less predictable and more worrying place in which to make a living than we imagined in the heady days of the 1960s.

How far were prosperity and upheaval related? Certainly, they were linked at the outset of the story: the Second World War, for all its destructiveness, stimulated industrial developments, social reforms and economic policies which helped produce the post-war boom, and even the German and Japanese miracles. However, just as it takes more than the oil embargo to explain the stumbling of the British and American economies over the past decade or more, so the world's economic growth was based on more than the economic stimulus of global conflict.

Naturally enough, any explanation has to take account of all sorts of developments: higher rates of savings and investment (in 1950-82 Britain invested twice as great a percentage of its national income as it had done in 1914-50 — although still much less than Japan or West Germany or France), more vigorous innovation, the diffusion of American-style "managerial capitalism", the intensified incentives for technically less advanced societies and industries to catch up with the pioneers of industrialization. But the central phenomena, according to Professor Van der Wee, derive from two main areas — the pressure of private and government demand for goods and services, and the flexibility of supply, fed from reserves of hitherto under-utilized labour and capital.

On the side of demand, Van der Wee draws attention to two related trends, which particularly affected the developed West: growing labour scarcity and power, and the rise of the welfare state and the mixed economy. The former trend meant that in the post-war years Western Europe and Japan were able to follow the earlier American path of rising real wages, and a consequent encouragement of high-performance production systems to satisfy new mass markets. The latter, rooted in the experience of depression and war, meant that economic growth and Keynesian demand management became "the mainspring of government policy". In America and Britain, for example, the Second World War produced government commitments to the maintenance of high levels of employment through demand management; in most Western countries the post-war years witnessed extensive and deliberate co-operation between governments, trade unions and business. Corporatism, consensus and welfare seemed to be the motor forces of harmonious expansion.

Structural forces were also strong on the side of supply. Inter-war stagnation and wartime uncertainty "had kept an artificially high percentage of workers in obsolete sectors, where incomes and living standards were low and prospects bleak". This slack (primarily in agriculture, but also in handicraft industries or where the "occupied" workers were underemployed) created huge labour reserves in Japan and Western Europe, although it was, significantly, much less important in Britain. These workers could be transferred (from the countryside to the city, from the workshop to the factory, from the West Indies to Britain, from Italy to Switzerland, from Algeria to France, from Turkey to West Germany) to attain substantial improvements in productivity and output.

On the basis of such changes, extended by the international redistribution of purchasing power and welfare, harmonized by a new network of international institutions, and sustained by cheap food, fuel and raw materials, the growth ideology and the experience of development and affluence transformed the old and new industrial nations of the world. The grim insecurities and soul-destroying economic

wastelands of the 1930s seemed left behind for good. Why, then, did the dream threaten to shatter so abruptly?

An important part of the answer seems to be that, almost perversely, the structural developments which helped produce and accelerate the long post-war boom were transmuted into retardative and distorting influences. Labour scarcities, which had initially helped to develop mass markets, even while they could be alleviated from the reserve armies of less productive pools of workers, began to manifest themselves in inflated wages, which became handicaps rather than stimuli to continued investment and growth. This was not a universal phenomenon, although a British readership will be all too familiar with its effects. By the same token, the near-universal driving forces of the welfare state and the mixed economy turned upon themselves, and the former became a burden in societies where the latter had stopped delivering the goods.

As a result of all this, the social harmonies which had sustained the post-war boom were subjected to greater and greater strains. The post-war consensus of labour, business and the State in many Western societies proved disturbingly fragile under economic pressure, interest groups became vested interests, and the consistency between the pursuit of equity and the pursuit of efficiency disappeared. Wage-earners, managers and investors became ever more deeply embedded in their current uses and patterns of reward, opposed to change and determined to retain their shares of the economic cake in as costless a way as possible, more concerned with protection (through subsidies, quotas, tariffs, investment incentives paid for by others). Correspondingly, the mixed economy generated its own contradictions. Stagflation, institutional frictions and policy deficiencies led to disillusion with Keynesian demand management and "planning". Thus, it is not only in Mrs Thatcher's Britain that politicians have begun to toy with supply-side economics, monetary restriction, the reduction of

taxes and government expenditure and intervention, privatization, and the reform of trade-union powers and privileges — only to be checked by the impossibility of drastic reforms where a measure of social and political stability depends on the continued satisfaction of new aspirations.

Tensions also originated on the side of supply. The ideal mixed economy had presupposed a balance between public policy and market competition: to varying degrees in Britain, Western Europe and America the State adjusted total demand, looked after some commanding heights of the economy (often in public ownership), and kept a paternal eye on public incomes; while the detailed allocation of resources and contractual bargaining was left to private individuals, companies and associations. But as things turned out, technical and organizational innovation meant that there appeared to be no optimal limit to the growth of business, and the resulting efflorescence of huge monopolies and conglomerates, like the emergence of powerful trade unions at critical points, defeated the residual forces of the market in the mixed economy. Prices and wages, investments and innovation were now more obviously shaped by the interests and power of particular groups.

Meanwhile, with the global economy a reality, substantial international differences in wages and living standards began to tell. Multi-national enterprises could easily transfer their capital from the developed West, where the institutional consequence of development had been the bolstering of rigidly protected rising wages and inflexible work patterns, to lower-wage regions in the less developed countries of the world — thus exacerbating the industrial problems of adaptation in the formerly prosperous regions.

And overarching everything was the renewal of instability, or threatened instability, in international economic relationships, capital movements and financial institutions. All this matters because economic interdependence is

From Princeton

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Managing the mixed economy

Martin Pugh

KEITH MIDDLEMAS
Power Competition and the State
Volume One: Britain in Search of Balance,
1940-61. Macmillan. £25.
0333414120

greater now than it ever was: for example, the fantastic US trade (and, indeed, budgetary) deficit is sustained by the flow of Japanese and European capital. If this ceases, the results could be disastrous; if American policy moves to restrict imports, the ripple of depression would be worldwide; and the likely alternative of "reflation" in the other two strong economies (Japan and West Germany), to increase the demand for American exports, seems no more welcome to the governments concerned. Given such threats of commercial disruption, and the huge amounts of money sloshing around the world (beyond the capabilities of even enlightened statesmen to control), the picture looks bleak.

Of course it may be that the story is exaggerated in the telling (another problem for the writing of contemporary history). After all, by normal historical standards the world is awash with material prosperity and technological sophistication. The threat to the former comes not from the latter, as Luddite interest groups would have us believe, but from vested interests (politicians and businessmen, trade unions and consumers of welfare), excessive caution and economic nationalism.

It is on this gloomy note that Professor Van der Wee ends his study: worldwide economic growth has produced worldwide interdependence; the problems of any one economy are related to the defects of all others (although, of all the erstwhile "developed" societies Britain does, alas, seem to have some distinctive difficulties); nothing less than a new world economic order will do to harmonize interests and overcome the growing structural deficiencies. It is a harsh theory, and in spite of the book's bulk, it is not always well exemplified by explicit and pertinent information. Yet the problem is none the less real. And the most obvious reassurance derives less from confidence in the insight and determination of our rulers than from the fact that it is so nearly a repetition of the anxieties and controversies of the mid-1940s, with their desperate pleas for new international systems. In terms of contemporary history, that is where we came in. Unfortunately, however, we at least know enough to grasp that the unexpected reserves which were then available for growth and structural change are now, and precisely because of their beneficial effects, much less abundant than they were forty years ago.

In *Politics in Industrial Society* Keith Middlemas described how the British governmental system was modified in the early twentieth century by the participation of organizations representing labour and industry. *Britain in Search of Balance, 1940-61* is the first of three volumes which essentially continue the story by examining the evolution of economic management by the State from 1940 to the present day. This topic has, of course, been tackled by a multitude of historians, biographers, political scientists and journalists, and it does not appear that Middlemas has anything new or distinctive to say about the period. What he does give us is a more rounded impression of the circumstances from which policy emerged, by accumulating a tremendous range of opinions and advice expressed by ministers, bureaucrats, political parties, the Federation of British Industries (FBI), trade unions and so on. The result is that the reader feels himself to be peering down on the field of battle while the smoke is still drifting across the scene, listening to a cacophony of cries and gunfire.

The confusion and lack of pattern is at its worst in the early chapters dealing with the war, for Middlemas simply plunges abruptly in at 1940 with no attempt to explain the context, system, options or chief participants; thereafter he lurches from one bit of the wood to another, leaving us to think out for ourselves how he has arrived at each point and where he is going. The process of policy-making is difficult to handle, but Middlemas offers neither analysis nor a clear narrative-line. He has an irritating habit of throwing out one-sentence claims and leaving them unsubstantiated. For example, we are told apropos of the war that officials misread the lessons of 1917-20, and that other writers have exaggerated the role of Keynes or Beveridge, which may well be true but surely requires justification.

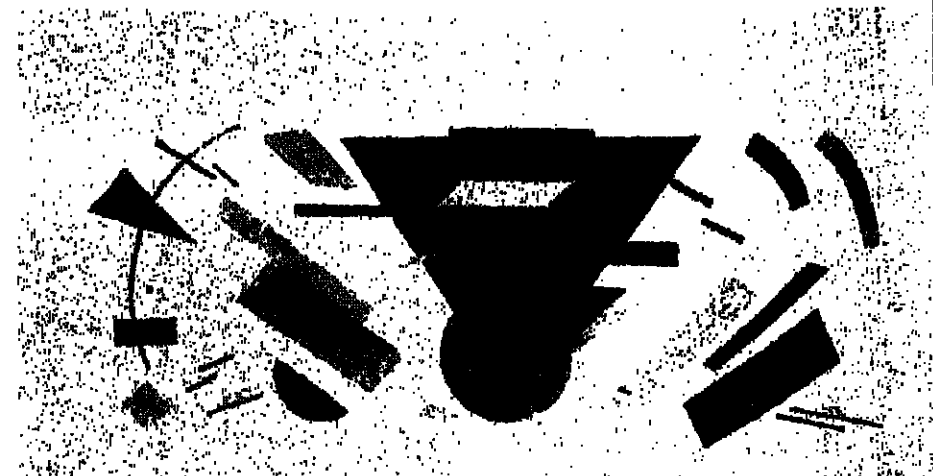
As with all attempts to write recent history, the source material presents some problems. Middlemas has both too much and too little.

The declared sources include Cabinet and other official categories of papers, records of the TUC, FBI and the political parties, together with a few collections of private papers. However, because of the thirty-year rule, much of this dries up before the present volume reaches its conclusion. Extensive use has therefore been made of oral evidence in the shape of 300 interviews with surviving participants. This seems promising, but it brings an extraordinary declaration by the author: we are to be given no references to this oral material. At the end of Volume Three a list of those interviewed will be printed, but that is as near as we shall get to knowing the evidence on which, one presumes, Middlemas based his observations.

For most readers, the account of the behaviour of Conservative administrations during 1951-61 will be the most interesting part of the book. Middlemas argues that the discussions which culminated in the 1944 White Paper on Employment for the Atlantic Government with little room for manoeuvre. By 1951 Labour had achieved full employment, low borrowing, social welfare and increased productivity through the suppression of consumer demand. Thereafter, the Conservatives removed restrictions on consumption, gave priority to housing in the struggle for resources, and reaped the benefit of gains in productivity without adding to them. Despite rhetoric about individualism and decentralization, they shifted from simple free enterprise to an acceptance of the mixed economy, full employment and "planning". Moreover, they became reconciled to the trade unions as partners in the State. This involved reshaping legislation in the field of industrial relations and re-

sisting partly pressure for action against the closed shop and for mandatory union ballots. Since Middlemas ignores the development of Tory ideas before the war this all appears very much pragmatic and opportunistic: but it actually was. By the mid-1950s it became apparent to some Tories that they were paying too high a price, in the shape of inflationary wage settlements, for keeping on the right side of the unions. Where Attlee had been tough they retreated behind inquiries into each new wage claim. From this perspective the "Second World War" begins to look like the "People's War" after all.

Guided by fear of Labour's continuing popularity, R. A. Butler and his successors at the Exchequer subordinated the long-term needs of the economy for capital investment to the immediate attractions of extra consumer credit and income-tax cuts, prior to the elections of 1955 and 1959, both of which were inevitably followed by deflation and a credit squeeze. In this depressing story Peter Thorneycroft emerges as a figure of some substance, first as the Board of Trade under Churchill and later as the Exchequer, in challenging the demand for opportunism, his Conservative colleagues many economic issues. Like Beveridge, later by 1955 that the combination of industrial lack of investment in key sectors such as machine-tools and motor cars was making the welfare state too expensive. As Chancellor in 1957, Thorneycroft was determined to restrain wages, consumption and expenditure, but found himself decisively checked by Macmillan. With his resignation, Thorneycroft paid the price for his convictions; and for his failure we are still paying the price—both economic and political—today.



Ivan Kudrashaev's composition, one of his series of designs for the first Soviet theatre, Orenburg, circa 1904, will be offered in Sotheby's sale of Russian Twentieth-Century and Avant-garde Art on April 2.

The human factor

Claire Makin

L. M. LACHMANN
The Market as an Economic Process
173pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £22.50
0631 14871 X

The dilemma facing economists today, as L. M. Lachmann points out in *The Market as an Economic Process*, is to build lasting theories on a constantly shifting empirical base. The highly abstract models offered by neo-classical economics, which has dominated economic thinking for the past fifty years, are yielding now to more realistic schools of thought. Lachmann is a disciple of one of these—the Austrian school—and has been active in reviving interest in its views, in particular that economics must take more account of the complexity of human actions and their effects on economic motivation. In spite of its title, his book reads more like a combination of methodology and economic history than a work on market theory. But Lachmann's approach to methodology is unconvincing. His suggested return to a psychological approach to economics may be valid, but he ignores the need at the same time for quantitative analysis; one lasting legacy of both the Keynesian and the neo-classical approaches, as most economists recognize, is that unless numerical values are given to the various parts of a complex model, economics loses its inter-

pretative power and becomes useless as science. Lachmann also overlooks important developments in the economics of uncertainty, such as the theory of "rational expectations" which attempts to explain how expectations formed on the basis of available information determine economic behaviour. Although Lachmann deals thoroughly with the history of economic thought, at times he allows his personal allegiances to cloud his objectivity. He constantly claims superiority for the Austrian school, but instead of comparing it closely with other schools, he relies on quotations from various economists to sustain his argument. More unfortunately, he seems to bear a personal grudge against any competing theorist. He writes, apparently without irony, that "three giants—Keynes, Knight and Sraffa—turned against the hapless Austrian who, in the middle of that black decade [the 1930s], thus had to do battle on three fronts. Naturally it proved a task beyond his strength."

Few economists would argue with Lachmann that thus far economics has failed, but with their information base constantly shifting because of technological progress and the internationalization of economic systems, economic theorists should look more closely at the complex ways in which human beings approach problems, and that so far the Austrian school provides the best method for doing so. But where does economics go from there?

Egotists and meliorists

Richard Davenport-Hines

MARCUS SIEFF
Don't Ask the Price: The memoirs of the President of Marks and Spencer
251pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.
0297 787144
BERRY RITCHIE and WALTER GOLDSMITH
The New Elite: Britain's top chief executives reveal the secrets of their success
179pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.
0297 789902

Businessmen are poor autobiographers. Those who make a lot of money tend, like the authors of autobiographies which set out to startle their readers, to be egotists, but otherwise their characters are antithetical. An entrepreneur like Marcus Sieff is bustling, practical and fertile in expedients for imposing his will on the world around him. A successful autobiographer dwells in his own imagination; he should gaze inwards and backwards, but Sieff has spent a lifetime looking forwards and outwards. He is a meliorist, convinced of the civilizing influence of material prosperity and efficiency. His instincts are generous but unsentimental: his methods conscientious but robust. As personnel director of his family's multiple retailing business of Marks and Spencer for many years and latterly its chairman, he ensured that the company was among the most fair and agreeable employers in the world; his precepts on "good human relations" increased the sum of human happiness, and if more widely applied by his contemporaries would have saved Britain from some of the economic decay and social despair of the past quarter century.

Lord Sieff's memoirs are methodical but unimaginative. They read as if he had prepared a list of the most important passages of his life, rather as he might compile a list of ten reasons for opening a shop at Runcorn for use in a board memorandum, and then set out just as systematically to cover them. Like any good board memorandum, his memoirs avoid controversy. Good turns by others are dutifully recalled, there are generous if stilted tributes to dead friends and colleagues, without a harsh word for anyone. He has nothing but charity for three ex-wives. Even a dinner with Sir Oswald Mosley, at which the Fascist behaved with caddish insensitivity, is described without one condemnatory adjective, although Sieff's abhorrence of Mosley is indubitable.

After the Second World War, in which he served in the Royal Artillery, where his organizational ability was well used in North Africa and the Allied occupation of Italy, Sieff spent three years in the nascent state of Israel, acting as an aide to Ben Gurion and other Zionist leaders. He has continued to be both a benefactor to Israel and an intermediary in its dealings with British politicians. In *Don't Ask the Price* he pitches himself into describing his activities defending Israel, but conveys nothing of what Zionism means to him. His account of the Six Day War in 1967, when he flew to Israel on a mission with several other plutocratic Jewish retailers, is either excessively modest or preposterously discreet. His account of his "business philosophy" is surprisingly anaemic too.

There is a description of his uncle Simon Marks which contains some barbs, but the most revealing parts of the book are the photographs. Often surrounded by an affectionate family, Marcus Sieff always seems to be grinning broadly or laughing uproariously, looking a picture of shrewd bonhomie. These illustrations give a more authentic picture of the man than his buttoned-up reminiscences.

The tone of *The New Elite* by Berry Ritchie and Walter Goldsmith is quite different. This book seems written to baffle what John Lahr has called "the psychopathic style—the ruthless, guiltless pursuit of self-interest—that Americans legitimise as success". Its account of British business performance since 1979 is unthinking and its treatment of business's political environment is tendentious and atavistic: as examples of great leaders it offers "Margaret Thatcher, of course; Admiral Sir John Woodward, the hero of the Falklands campaign; the manager of Liverpool Football Club".

The authors fawn on domineering men, and betray their ethical inadequacy in every chapter; but most of the ten entrepreneurs whom they have interviewed rise above the surrounding ugliness. Sieff is an admirer of Christopher Hogg of Courtaulds, who figures here as a man equally conscientious about human relations, although he has drawn the ire of Mrs Thatcher for practising what she preaches. David Plastow of Vickers, with his commitment to Team Briefing and his support of all the admirable work of the Industrial Society, is a man whose broad sympathies and sense of human responsibility also resemble those of Sieff. By contrast Richard Giordano of BOC "craps" on his managers "from a great height", although he is willing to listen to some colleagues: "I'm not talking about listening to my secretary or the

receptionist.... They don't have power bases."

Most of the entrepreneurs interviewed are inequitable, assiduous men with physical stamina, single-mindedness and powers of communication unimaginable to most people. All of them are fascinating when left to speak for themselves without the doctrinal gloss or sycophantic clichés of Ritchie and Goldsmith. Their attitudes are well conveyed, and the imagery of their language is often revealing. By no means all of them share the assumption of

their interviewers that success provides its own total justification; many recognize the destructive and self-destructive elements of their world.

While the virtues of Marcus Sieff have produced a stiff and lifeless book, the medley of opinions and indiscretions in *The New Elite* is gripping albeit sometimes repellent. Decent people are losers, as Ritchie and Goldsmith rejoice. "The New Elite are just tougher and more determined than anyone else.... In the end, that's the secret."

Renting happiness

Rhoda Koenig

L. J. DAVIS
Onassis and Christina: The amazing story of a fabulous dynasty
269pp. Gollancz. £10.95.
0575 040343

Onassis and Christina, L. J. Davis says, "is the only book I have ever written whose moral I know, and it is this: money doesn't buy happiness". Davis may not be responsible for the adjectives in his book's subtitle nor for the noun that now summons up Joan Collins rather than Ming emperors, but his prose does cater to readers whose attitude toward the wealthy is a mixture of reverence and resentment. He sees Aristotle Onassis as "a king" and begins his book with the pounding of muffled drums for the funeral ("Onassis was buried as he had lived, and some would have said fittingly so, amid lies, tension, greed, farce, and the warfare of women"). Davis goes on to exclaim over the Greek ship-owner's yacht, "the stools were upholstered with the scrotums of whales... the fireplace in the smoking room was inlaid with lapis lazuli at a cost of four dollars a square inch". And about the man himself: "No one ever pretended that he was either a very profound or... a very original thinker, nor was he renowned for the pungency of his utterance or the penetration of his insight. He was, by all accounts, a deplorable father and he had been a faithless husband."

These remarks appear in a chapter entitled "The Greatest Social Climber of All Time", and indeed Davis seems not even to have the sneaking respect often felt for a great rogue.

Onassis does not exist in this book without his money—his childhood and early manhood

are skipped, and the book starts at a point when he was already extremely rich. We therefore miss such plangent and humanizing details as the information that, in his early years, the millionaire risked his life in order to ransom his father from a Turkish prison—only to be told by the old man that he had paid too high a price. (These and other stories can be found in Peter Evans's much more readable *Aristotle Onassis*.)

Onassis made his fortune when he realized that, after the Second World War, oil would become enormously important and that oil companies could either increase production or build oil tankers but would not be able to afford to do both. So he went into shipping and was able to hold on to his money when the Suez crisis created an immediate need for his ships: oil companies whose boycott had threatened him with bankruptcy just before the canal was closed paid him more than \$60 million in six months. But both luck and cunning deserted him in his purchase of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, whose spendthrift ways were too keen even for him and whose wilful behaviour made him, just before he died, look for a way to end the marriage. His children gave him grief as well—just when his son, Alexander, seemed to be developing (late) into a worthy heir, he was killed in a freak plane crash. Onassis complained bitterly that it should have been Christina: his lumpy, unprepossessing daughter who had enraged him by mollifying into a marriage with an American mini-millionaire. After that liaison ended, Christina made two other brief marriages, one of them to a chap who was probably connected to the young Bente. She is now married to an attractive young venture capitalist. If happiness cannot be brought, as Mr Davis never tires of telling us, the rich have always known that you can at least rent it.

Politics versus policy

Jack Hayward

PETER HALL
Governing the Economy: The politics of State intervention in Britain and France
341pp. Oxford: Polity. £25 (paperback, £8.95).
0745602274

In the current debate about economic policy, two contrasting approaches have been emerging. They can be summarized as "politics determines policy" as against "policy determines politics". The first identifies national economic policy styles that are distinctive and enduring because of the institutional structure and attitudes of mind of the decision-making élites. It implies that the dominant style in each country cuts across all economic issues and survives the impact of economic crises, reversals of official ideology, even changes of régime, largely unscathed. The "policy determines politics" approach, on the other hand, assumes that policy is more the result of functional necessities imposed by the particular problems at issue, and, starting with a specific problem, identifies the cluster of actors who are dealing with it. This approach finds convergence between national economies on each specific policy, both in terms of the objectives pursued and the results attained; hence the vague for French-style planning in the 1960s, Australian-style neo-corporatism in the 1970s and Thatcher-style monetarism in the 1980s.

Peter Hall's admirably lucid, balanced and comprehensively documented study of economic policy-making in Britain and France consists mainly of two separate case-studies, with a theoretical introduction and two concluding

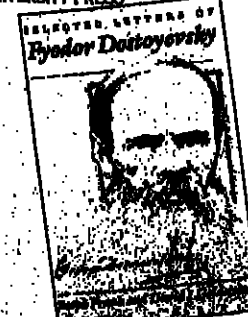
chapters that present a framework based upon "the interaction of interests, institutions, and ideas in the policy process", giving pride of place to the role of political, administrative and economic organizations. The comparisons are usually implicit rather than systematic. His focus brings him closer to the "politics determines policy" approach, so that when he considers specific issues like devaluation or industrial restructuring he concentrates on the distinctive approach of French and British policymakers and the attendant outcomes. When he tries to cross the boundaries between national styles and attributes a form of "Keynesianism" to the French Socialists, he is on much more controversial ground. The very modest reflation in France of 1981-2 was assumed to be consistent with an anticipated international upswing, while the commitment to planning and nationalization belonged to a style of economic intervention that was not Keynesian.

The intellectual links between France and Britain have been marked by intense periods of francophilia and anglomania. In economic and political matters, there has been a tendency for the French to admire Britain. However, while Britain pioneered the Industrial Revolution, from the late nineteenth century she entered a period of relative economic decline that is making her the pioneer of a "deindustrial revolution", and when we see M. Chirac privatizing Saint-Gobain, a firm established in 1665 by the patron saint of public enterprise (Colbert), we can only hope that in imitating Thatcherism the French will not also import the British disease of deindustrialization and decline. But perhaps France will quickly revert to national type, so lending support to one side in the continuing politics versus policy argument.

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Usually reliable sources

David Papineau

ALVIN I. GOLDMAN
Epistemology and Cognition
437pp. Harvard University Press. £24.50.
0674258959

Strange things are happening in epistemology. In one well-known example, Mr Smith thinks that one of his friends owns a Ford. This is because Mr Smith's friend Mr Nogot has always owned a maroon Ford. Indeed Smith saw Mr Nogot driving the maroon Ford just that morning. But unknown to Smith, Mr Nogot has recently sold the Ford, and was only driving it somewhere for the new owner. Even so, Smith's belief, that one of his friends owns a Ford, is true. For, as it happens, another of Smith's friends, Mr Havit, has just that morning bought a new Ford, though as yet Smith has no inkling of this.

The question is: does Mr Smith know that one of his friends owns a Ford? According to traditional epistemology, a true belief qualifies as knowledge if the believer is justified in believing it. Smith has a true belief. One of his friends does own a Ford. And he certainly seems to be justified in believing it. Didn't he just see Mr Nogot driving the maroon Ford he's always owned? But intuitively it doesn't seem as if Smith knows that one of his friends owns a Ford.

Examples like this are called "Gettier cases", because they were first brought to the attention of philosophers by Edmund Gettier in a three-page article in *Analysis* in 1963. Since then probably more than a thousand books and articles have offered new analyses of knowledge designed to deal with the problematic Gettier cases.

Gettier cases show that knowledge doesn't depend on justification, in the sense of having good conscious reasons for a belief, so much as being hooked up to the world in the right way. Mr Smith has good conscious indications of a state of affairs that would make his belief true. But his belief is only true because of a quite different state of affairs. Mr Smith's belief isn't true because he's in tune with the way the world is. He's just lucky that his belief is true.

That's easy enough to say. The difficulty is to make it precise. The problem which has so occupied philosophers since Gettier is that of specifying the exact sense in which a belief's truth has to be more than an accident if it is to count as knowledge.

Some of the best ideas have come from Alvin Goldman. In 1967 he suggested that a true belief counts as knowledge only if it is caused by the fact that makes it true. Mr Smith's belief that one of his friends owns a Ford is caused by the misleading circumstances involving Mr Nogot. But those circumstances aren't what make the belief true. The belief is made true by Mr Havit owning a Ford. And that fact has no causal influence on Mr Smith at all.

Unfortunately this simple causal theory is too crude, as Goldman showed in 1976. Imagine Henry is driving through the countryside with his young son, pointing out items of interest: "that's a cow", he says, "that's a tractor", "that's a barn", and so on. There's nothing wrong with Henry or his eyesight. So when he looks at a barn, and identifies it as such, it seems as if his belief ought to be a clear case of knowledge. But suppose that Henry is unknowingly driving through an area containing a lot of papier-mâché barn façades. As it happens, Henry is looking at one of the few real barns thereabouts, and his belief that the object is a barn is therefore both true and, moreover, caused by the fact that makes it true. But it seems unsatisfactory to call his belief knowledge. For he would have had just the same belief if he'd been looking at a papier-mâché façade. Once more, Henry's veracity seems too much a matter of luck for him to count as having knowledge.

The moral Goldman drew from Henry's story was that knowledge not only needs to be caused by the fact which makes it true, but moreover that this has to be brought about by a reliable process, a process that usually produces true beliefs. Henry's belief is caused by a real barn. But, because of the papier-mâché façades, the underlying belief-forming process, namely, scanning the surrounding countryside, is not generally reliable, even though it

produces a true belief in the particular case.

In 1979 Goldman went further, arguing that reliability shouldn't be thought of as a replacement for the notion of justification. On this view the mistake made by traditional epistemology wasn't asking for justification as such, but rather in thinking of justification "internally", in terms of conscious reasons, rather than "externally", in terms of production by a reliable mechanism. No doubt the idea that justification depends on reliable mechanisms rather than conscious reasoning runs counter to trained philosophical sensibilities. But Goldman was able to show that the idea is in perfectly good accord with everyday thinking.

Epistemology and Cognition is Goldman's first full-length work on these matters. It falls into two parts. The first, "Theoretical Foundations", develops his thoughts on knowledge, justification and related issues. Much of this is about exactly how reliability should be understood, a question which has been much debated in the recent literature, and Goldman gives a very useful survey of the alternative possibilities, along with his reasons for his preferred solution. There are also chapters on a number of related general topics like truth, realism, content and scepticism.

The second and somewhat longer part, "Assessing Our Cognitive Resources", is a survey of current theories and research in cognitive science. There are chapters on perception, memory, deductive reasoning, probability judgments, belief revision and a number of similar topics. In each case Goldman formulates a general picture of our mental mechanisms, and then uses this picture to assess the reliability of those mechanisms for producing true beliefs. He also assesses the informative power and speed of those mechanisms.

The book is somewhat disappointing. There are plenty of good arguments and telling insights in the first part, but Goldman tries to cover every angle of possible disagreement, and ends up with a complex collection of observations that lacks the thrust of his earlier work. The second section is interesting enough as a survey of recent psychological findings,

but it's not much more than that, and there are serious questions to be asked about Goldman's conception of the interaction between psychology and epistemology.

One of the strangest things about recent epistemology is that it seems to have nothing to say about one of the central concerns of traditional epistemology. From Descartes onwards, traditional epistemology has advised us on how to avoid error. This is an immediate corollary of the fact that traditional epistemology deals in conscious reasons. Different traditional theories differ on exactly what kind of conscious reasons suffice for justification. But they coincide in suggesting that the way to avoid error is to make sure that our beliefs have the right kind of conscious backing: careful believers should consciously monitor their thought processes, and embrace a belief only when it is justified.

There seems to be nothing analogous in recent epistemology. Instead of telling us how to avoid error, contemporary epistemologists test proposed analyses of knowledge against intuitions about possible counter-examples. There is a book by Robert K. Shope, called *The Analysis of Knowing: A decade of research*, which details the various theories proposed by Goldman and others, and explains how they deal with ninety-eight different tricky examples from the literature. Henry and the barns appear in Shope's story, as do Mr Nogot and Mr Havit in a number of ingenious variations. Another popular tale involves Tom Grabit, who is observed stealing a book from the library, but whose being known to have done so is complicated by his identical twin also having been in the vicinity at the time, or, in another variation, by his demented mother spreading false tales about a non-existent identical twin.

There is nothing incoherent about trying to distil an "everyday" conception of knowledge from intuitions about such examples. What is not so clear is why this enterprise should count as part of philosophy. Why suppose that the conception so identified will be philosophically significant? In particular, why suppose that it will have anything to do with the traditional epistemological concern to avoid error? These

questions become particularly pressing once turns out that our everyday conception of justification is a reliable one. The reliability or unreliability of the mechanisms causing our beliefs isn't in general apparent to consciousness. So it is hard to see how such "external" facts about reliability can be of significance to somebody concerned to avoid error.

However, it would be a mistake, as Goldman himself points out, to dismiss the relativist notion of justification as altogether irrelevant to the avoidance of error. It is true that if justification depends on causation by reliable mechanisms, then (as the case of Henry illustrates) we won't always be in a position to make sure our beliefs are justified just by doing some extra thinking. But to assume that extra thinking is the only possible way to avoid error is itself to adopt the traditional point of view. From a more general perspective, anything that leads to your belief-forming mechanisms becoming reliable will help you to avoid error. Sometimes mere conscious reflection will help achieve reliability. But in other cases, like Henry's, you might need actively to train yourself to make perceptual discriminations that were previously beyond you. Or you might train yourself to stop jumping to conclusions in certain kinds of unfamiliar circumstances. Or, more generally, you might do whatever you need to do to get rid of unreliable mental habits and acquire reliable ones.

Goldman adverts to the possibility of our actively revising our belief-forming habits to increase their reliability right at the beginning and right at the end of his book. But in between he seems to take it back. Early in his argument he explains that he is going to concentrate on "processes", in the sense of innate cognitive mechanisms, rather than on "methods", in the sense of the further mental skills and techniques that humans can acquire. But he provides no obvious rationale for this distinction. Perhaps (though I doubt it) there is a principled way of dividing mental habits into natural processes and nurtured methods. But even so it would be a mistake to conclude, as Goldman often seems to, that the processes comprise a basic mental tool-kit that we can never get rid of, whatever more elaborate devices we later acquire.

One of the psychological experiments Goldman discusses is the well-known case of Linda, the feminist bank-teller. In this experiment subjects are told a story along these lines: Linda is thirty-one years old, single, outspoken, bright, a philosophy graduate, and deeply concerned with issues of discrimination and social justice. The subjects are then asked which is more probable: (a) Linda is a bank-teller; or (b) Linda is a bank-teller and actively the feminist movement. Nearly everybody chooses (b). Eighty-five per cent of decision science postgraduates at Stanford University chose (b). But (a) is the right answer. The probability of two things both being true must be less than the probability that just one of them is.

Goldman has a theory, involving "representativeness routines", about what makes people prefer (b) to (a), and he argues that such routines might be a reliable route to the truth in general, even if they go wrong in this particular case. But there is a much more obvious point to make about the Linda experiment. It doesn't work with people who have had the error pointed out to them. Anybody familiar with this kind of example will opt for answer (a) without blinking. "Representativeness routines" might in some sense be innate processes, but it is clearly possible for people to stop using them.

Human beings are so smart not because their native thought processes are especially reliable, but rather because all their habits of thought, whether innate or acquired, can alter in response to information about their reliability. What philosophers ought to be asking psychologists is how this happens, and in particular whether there are any limitations on our ability to transcend our natural endowments in the pursuit of truth. Goldman promises us a second volume, in which he will turn from processes to methods, and examine the "epistemic" question of "social epistemology". Perhaps this will lead him to ask the epistemologically important questions. It is a pity that he so circumspcctly his project in this volume that he does not ask them here.

PETER REDGROVE

Under Western eyes

John B. Dunlop

LEONARD SCHAPIRO
Russian Studies
Edited by Ellen Dahrendorf
400pp. Collins Harvill. £15.
0002727102

The death of Professor Leonard Schapiro at the London School of Economics in 1983 at the age of seventy-five has created a void in the ranks of Western Soviet specialists which is unlikely to be filled. Combining an excellent command of Russian with formidable erudition and with training as a lawyer, Schapiro brought unusual breadth and moral perceptiveness to the analysis of the genesis and evolution of the Soviet Union. His magisterial studies *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy* (1955) and *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (1960) dominated once and for all his reputation as a dominant figure in the field. Together with a few others, such as the late Marie Fainsod of Harvard, he may be regarded as a pioneer in the Anglo-American academic study of Soviet politics.

Russian Studies is a collection of occasional pieces by Schapiro which were selected by his former colleague, Ellen Dahrendorf, in consultation with Harry Willetts of St Antony's College, Oxford. Grouped under three headings - "Liberalism and the Law", "Marxism and the Revolution" and "Literature and Ideas" - the various published and unpublished lectures, essays and book reviews contained in the volume represent a kind of meditation on the past two centuries of Russian and Soviet historical development. In this collection, Schapiro figures as a political historian and a historian of ideas, as well as a fledgling but gifted literary critic. On the whole, the quality of the pieces is very high, a tribute to Schapiro's vigorous scholarship and keen intelligence.

Thinking with passion

Alain Besançon

FREDERICK C. COPELSTON
Philosophy in Russia: From Herzen to Lenin
and Berdyaev
450pp. Tunbridge Wells: Search Press. £25.
085325771

How I wish I could say only kind things about Frederick Copleston's latest book. This unusually painstaking and productive historian of philosophy, whose own philosophy is a very sane one, has now, at the end of an honourable career, extended his investigations into the field of Russian philosophy, which is to be applauded. But as often happens when people approach that world so filled with mirages, Professor Copleston's virtues of honesty and integrity have here played a nasty trick on him and led him into a certain naivety. The sound workman has employed the same tools as always without realizing that the subject he has to deal with is of another kind and demands tougher, harder ones.

Let me first say what is good about *Philosophy in Russia: From Herzen to Lenin and Berdyaev*. There are not all that many histories of Russian philosophy. Those by N. O. Lossky (English edition, 1952) and by V. V. Zenkovsky (English edition, 1953) are marked by the time and place of their writing. They are histories written from within the sphere of influence of Russian philosophy itself, as it had evolved in the years immediately before the First World War and then during the emigration. They are moreover somewhat muddled and poorly written. Andrzej Walicki's history is a Western one, but Polish, and written there, far out of a close contact with Soviet power, because its force and penetration. Copleston has a thorough knowledge of the history of philosophy and the detachment of a Westerner who can be more objective.

Objectivity means equanimity and an absence of *parti pris*. Then Copleston is objective. He looks at the systems of the Russian thinkers and expounds them one by one. With

Among the previously unpublished materials, Schapiro's lecture "The Importance of Law in the Study of Politics and History" and his essays on Lenin's intellectual formation, on Plekhanov and on the last years of the poet Aleksandr Blok are particularly stimulating. Of the published writings, especially noteworthy are the essay "My Fifty Years in Social Science" and articles on the 1909 *Vekhi* collection, Trotsky, and Solzhenitsyn. As Harry Willetts points out in his introduction, Schapiro's "feeling for the tragic essence of Russia's history never degenerated into facile pessimism". In the process of scrutinizing Russian history over the past two hundred years, Schapiro discerns a small group of enlightened figures who, despite theoretical differences, share a belief in the need for legal order. Since Schapiro spent over twenty years at the Bar before changing careers, he is understandably concerned with this vital question: "The only safeguard against confusion; and the only condition for ensuring organic growth", he writes at one point, "is a well-rooted legal system and a strong and independent judiciary to safeguard it". Unfortunately, as Schapiro notes, the Tsarist legal system was shaky at best, while Lenin and his successors have made a mockery of the law.

Those Russian historical figures who draw Schapiro's admiration are individuals who "aimed both at safeguarding the fabric of the state from revolutionary cataclysm and at encouraging the development of civil rights and political liberty within the framework of traditional institutions". Such figures are Karamzin, Speransky, Pushkin, Chicherin, Turgenev, Shipov, Petr Struve and the *Vekhi* authors, Stolypin, and Solzhenitsyn. (The inclusion of Stolypin in this list may trouble some readers, but Schapiro aptly notes that Stolypin's dissolving of the revolutionary-minded Second Duma in 1907 paradoxically "initiated a period of real constitutional progress".) In a review published in 1958, Schapiro terms these figures "conservative liberals", while in a piece published in 1980 he classifies them as "liberal conservatives". Whatever the label, it is these political centrists who, for Schapiro, illuminate the only hopeful path for Russia's future development.

Sadly for both Russian and world history, the voices of the extremists have prevailed, and Russia has been torn between "dark reaction and red revolution". Two sirens have proved particularly devastating for Russian thought: populism and Marxism. Both feature an abstract and fanatical belief in "the people". Concerning populism, Schapiro is in agreement with Petr Struve, who called it "the syphilis of Russian thought". A blinkered and irrational faith in the innate wisdom of the *narod* reached out to enmesh such otherwise admirable thinkers as the Slavophiles and Dostoevsky on the right and Herzen on the left. It fostered a contempt for legal order as something alien and Western.

The second siren, Marxism, also mythologized the people. The result was a lack of intellectual rigour and often a purblind dishonesty on the part of its adherents. Thus Plekhanov was "more concerned with the good of the cause than with intellectual truth". Julius Martov, while a man of personal integrity, was "in many ways a slave to his own theories". Trotsky believed in "the millennium, the one and only solution to all ills". Like populism, Marxism on Russian soil became an unreal abstraction, an idol to which human beings could be, and were, sacrificed.

From his study of Russian history, Schapiro, as we have seen, concludes that the law represents a fundamental bulwark against social chaos and the suppression of individual rights. But is the law by itself a sufficient bulwark? Schapiro is prepared, even eager, to listen to those who argue that it is not. Two additional bulwarks, in particular, attract his interest and sympathy.

The first could be called national self-quiet sympathy, he tries to take the heat out of the discussion, writing of Lavrov as he has written of Berkeley, of Lenin as of Duns Scotus. But Russian thought rests on passions which we need to understand because it is those that give that thought its true meaning. Copleston does not seem to have allowed sufficiently for the historical background, or for what might be called the nationalist and political *coulisses* of Russian philosophy.

Take the religious thought of the Slavophiles, for example. It claims to be the culmination of an Orthodox tradition stemming from the Greek Fathers and a critique of the Western tradition. But when one looks closer at it, one finds that it is in fact an acclimatized version of German Romantic philosophy which, out of nationalistic pride, denies that it is borrowed and claims a false genealogy, while preserving the content of Messianism which the German Romantics assigned to the German peoples, and transferring it to Russia. Ivan Kireevsky is not an Orthodox author who assimilated Western philosophy in a critical spirit, but one who assimilated the vulgate of German idealism in an uncritical spirit and subsequently constructed for himself a tradition which is not the one he in fact followed.

My most serious criticism of Copleston is that he draws no precise boundary between ideology and philosophy. A historian of art does not treat a painting by Leonardo and a Kentucky Fried Chicken sign as if they were in the same class, and the gap between philosophy and ideology is wider still, for it is one of kind not degree. Ideology purports to be a philosophy (whereas advertising signs do not purport to be high art), but when one examines the thought of Lenin, it is easy to show that it is not bad philosophy (which would justify its appearing in this history) but an intellectual product, ingenious and effective in its own sphere, which is quite alien to the spirit of philosophy. For historical reasons, a large part of what Russian intellectuals have written (Bolsheviks, Chernyshevsky, Lavrov, Plekhanov, Lenin, official Soviet philosophy) has turned towards ideology. To treat such authors as philosophers, in the way Copleston does, so as to make pertinent criticisms of

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them, is to introduce an anomaly into this history and to succumb to the lures of ideology by taking them for what they claim to be but are not.

One understands this ecumenicalism better when one reaches the conclusion, where Father Copleston gives his own philosophy of Russia. He repeats the thesis, frequently upheld, of a solid continuity between old Russia and the Soviet Union. Marxism is interpreted both as a continuation of the Westerners and of the bureaucratic practices of the *ancien régime*. Soviet imperialism is nationalism as a continuation of Slavophile Dostoevskian Messianism. I believe that thesis to be all the more dangerously false for having the semblance of truth. There is not the space to refute it here. Suffice it to say that it has served as the basis for the policy of several leading Western statesmen. Their continual failure is an indication that the thesis needs revising.

It is in the figure of Leonard Schapiro, Britain and the West have lost an extraordinary scholar and a wise man.

Kegan Paul International have recently published a second edition, newly revised and updated, of *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union (with an Appendix on the non-Muslim Turkic peoples of the Soviet Union): An historical and statistical handbook* by Shirin Akiner (462pp. £25. 0 7103 0188 X). Since the first edition appeared in 1983, Dr Akiner has been able to incorporate material from the results of the 1979 census, only lately released, and she has also amplified sections on the Jewish peoples, the Karaims, Krymchaks and Tats.

W H Smith
Literary
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1987

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Literature in a book
published in 1986.

W H SMITH W H SMITH

Handwritten note in a box: "The Winner"

Remainders

Eric Korn

People write and ask me in various polite ways whether everything, anything, I say is true. We know you make things up, they say, but how can I join IMBROGLIO, the International Moral Brigade Resolutely Opposing Gays, Lesbians, Intersexuals & Onanists? And I have to apologize.

Or contrariwise, wasn't that stuff about the toxicology of tarantulas a bit OTT, they complain? And I have to point out it was lifted straight from the latest number of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, or not, as the case may be.

Yet it's always perfectly clear to me. Well, no it isn't. From time to time the level of circumambient absurdity reduces me to a delighted stupor, until I realize I'm partly responsible for it. Observation is theory-loaded behaviour: paranoids do live in a threatening world, and I live in a draft one. But the rules seem to me clear. There is no point in a fictional Believe It Or Not, whose only interest is its improbability. It is remarkable if there is a Gisela Weberczek Piffel in the telephone book, quite unremarkable if there isn't. It is quite interesting, although by now dreadfully familiar, that two most respectable Canadian historians are Professor Careless and Professor Wrong: it wouldn't be at all interesting if they didn't exist. Fiction and autobiography do not depend on veridicality for their appeal; biographies and train timetables do.

Good. After that homily are you prepared to believe that the organization that supplies pure water to Northern Lower California (and perhaps other regions of Mexico) goes by the acronym CESSFT? That my holiday reading has included Victor Dunstan's *Did the Virgin Mary Live and Die in England?* (Megiddo Press, £7.50). It isn't so improbable, bearing in mind that she came of an old Cornish family, that when her Son's political activities had made Palestine too hot for her, she would think of retiring to the place where He had been Up

(at one of the twenty-three Druidical Universities, highly regarded by Upwardly Mobile Palestinians).

I mean, what would be the point of my making up, if I dared, a book called *The Crows of Shakespeare* (1899) by the irreproachably factual Mrs Jane Blackburn, who also wrote *Birds of Moidart*. In the preface, she remarks that she has "only endeavored to sketch a few of the scenes which I hope may interest those who care for crows and induce young people to read Shakespeare". This in itself tells us a lot, does it not, about the prioritization of intellectual pursuits among the English *haute bourgeoisie*—she doesn't speak of inducing those who love Shakespeare to study ornithology—and it would not tell us anything half so interesting if I had made it up.

* * *

Suddenly London, for years a monophonic town, has all these hotly competing evening newspapers (as I write, each successive new one is half the price of the one before; by the time these words appear in print they will be giving free rubies and caviar with each copy). In previous newspaper wars, literature benefited because everyone gave away complete sets of H. G. Wells or Dickens; so far the benefit to literacy has been marginal. But the *Evening News*, which I think ceased publication just after the Second Matabele War (but perhaps it was the Korean one) is back in the business of enlightenment ("Why did Vice Girl wear Wife's Skirt?") and their secret weapon is the Classic Short Story; this is meant to show up the *Daily News*, which is publishing non-classic short stories by the likes of Beryl Bainbridge, and having to pay for them, too. (The *Evening News* always did have a daily *feuilleton*, usually cheerily undemanding items about young men in golfing pullovers in love in seaside resorts, or stories about lonely proud old soldiers.) The Classic Short Story last week was Kipling, I'm pleased to say, and began:

Far back in the "seventies", before they had built any Public-offices at Simla, and the broad road round Jakko lived in a pigeon-hole in the P.W.D. hovels, her parents made Miss Gaurey marry Colonel Schreiderling.

Well, that's how Kipling began it, and very atmospheric it must have been too, once upon a time, but the *Evening News* got cold feet; their version goes:

Far back in the "seventies", before they had built any Public-offices at Simla, and the broad road round Jakko lived in a pigeon-hole in the P.W.D. hovels, her parents made Miss Gaurey marry Colonel Schreiderling.

They had some thoughts about footnotes, doubtless, but seem to have thought better of it, so poor old Colonel Schreiderling, with an income of two hundred asterisk rupees a month, will have to hack it on his own. It is a useful service though: henceforth an * in these columns will mean "I know this is obscure, but I'm not going to explain it."

* * *

A Californian correspondent, a person of an amiability unusual even in that sunlit realm, has communicated with me, hinting, in the discreetest possible manner, that I do not always display a Coolidge-like parsimony with words. He has done this by introducing me abundantly to the life and thought of Ashleigh Brilliant—the world's first professional aphorist, a man whose thoughts have travelled farther and may last longer than those of Chairman Whatsname (Gwajzname). In the new romanization.) Ashleigh Brilliant (he gets a lot of amusement out of playing with his name, so I won't) is the man who writes the words we see on walls, on T-shirts and on postcards that contain, instead of views of the ocean, views of the Universe. Brilliant has earned the respect of us all by persuading the postcard manufacturers to pay him royalties, and has successfully sued a shirtmaker who thought that wisdom lies in the public domain, especially when it comes in short bursts. He may also have trademarked a particularly kind of world-weary ironic reversal; "Let's be proud of what we are, regardless of the facts"; "Right now would be a good time to postpone everything"; "I can face anything except the future, and parts of the past and present." If it has less than seventeen words and begins "The unfortunate thing about life is . . ." "How can I . . .", or "Why don't other people . . .", chances are that Brilliant wrote it. Since he's had more than three thousand thoughts, published thoughts, that is, and has sold more than a hundred million copies of his works in the postcard format, chances are you have come across quite a few, even if you haven't seen the books, whose titles (*Appreciate Me Now and Avoid the Rush; I May Not Be Totally Perfect But Parts of Me Are Excellent; All I Want is a Warm Bed and a Kind Word and Unlimited Power*) epitomize the contents and also exemplify them. Brilliant is endlessly quotable even against himself ("How can I fail when I have no purpose?") but I'm

afraid of his lawyers, and will limit myself to a few sour reflections (Ashleigh Brilliant gave me live in Santa Barbara, which is too beautiful for human occupation) on certain quantitative aspects of the creative process.

The curious thing is that Mr Brilliant, though given to laconicisms, is not laconic. Three thousand aphorisms, some of them as long as a verb, they draw one by the charm of their diversity of texture and taste, a diversity more apparent than real, until you rise and look at them from the feast. Brilliant is an oxymoronic prodigy: garrulously taciturn, laconically prolix, endlessly brief: the first man to run a marathon in a thousand fifty-six dashes.

There is a sadder point to make: Ashleigh Brilliant still has words left over. Like a Southern Californian he has become (though he started not a million miles from where I crouch over my keyboard) he interrupts himself from time to time to make sure we are not having a good time and not missing the point, each volume has a preamble that explodes into aphorisms are, who Ashleigh Brilliant is and how he got from Fordwych Road to Santa Barbara (a doctoral thesis on the sociological impact of the motor car, followed by *the Haight-Ashbury*). Can it be that there is a *man-flu* appearing in prostatic dribbles?

I know when I'm outclassed. In Brilliant's words, I feel much better now that I've given up hope. This is a suitable occasion to declare myself the winner with

THIS ISN'T AN EPIGRAM
IT'S AN EPIC THAT SHRANK

* * *

I had a dream about a deadly new ailment that was transmitted by money. The first people to go down with it were usurers and couponers and everyone said "serves them right". THE PLAGUE: GOD'S PUNISHMENT FOR AVARICE said the posters; SERVE THE DIRTY BANKERS RIGHT said the graffiti. They changed their tune, didn't they, when they found that any exchange of goods and services, even casual labour, could permit the spread of the dreaded Surplus Labour Virus or SLV? Didn't the Government lend its backing to a campaign against excessive materialism, pointing out that while safe earning was some help (the use of letters of credit, the so-called "plastic johnnies"), the real protection lay in abandoning the modern heresy of financial permissiveness and the virtue of growth, and a return to the medieval values of poverty? Closed down the Stock Exchange? Censored their own making? denounced capitalist propaganda in the media, the loonies who taught business studies to the young (leaving everybody saying the real culprit was the post motive, didn't they?)

In my dream, that is. The less well-known Roger Machedi Prize (£2,000 for a book on the performing arts) named after the Hamish Hamilton publisher and administered by The Society of Authors, has been awarded to Kurt Gatzert for his two-volume history, *The British Musical Theatre* (published by Macmillan and to be reviewed in the forthcoming issue of the *TLS*). The judges, Arthur Marshall, Michael Ratcliffe and Henry Spurling, described the book as "a triumph of theatrical history".

CONFERENCES AND LECTURES

The Ninth Writers' Day organized by PEN takes place at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on Saturday March 28 and includes lectures by Doris Lessing and Amos Oz and the presentation of various prizes. Tickets are available from P.E.N., 7 Dille Street, London SW3 4JL.

All profits go to help writers in prison. The London Conference of the Association of Art Historians takes place at the Victoria and Albert Museum and Imperial College on March 28-30. All enquiries should be directed to Diana Dethloff, Dept of History of Art, Westfield College (University of London) Hampstead NW3 7ST. (Tel: 01 435 7141). The next issue of the *TLS* is a special art history number.

Letters

'RAB'

Sir, — In his review of *RAB: The life of R. A. Butler* (March 13), Norman Gash says that Anthony Howard offers no reason for the transformation of Butler from being an "old gang" Conservative politician into the progressive liberal of the first post-war years. This sea-change happened when he was working on the 1944 Education Act during which, he once told me, he was deeply influenced by the writing of Reinhold Niebuhr, the American religious philosopher, whose books, notably *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932) and *Human Nature* (1941) and *Human Destiny* (1943), were seminal reading for the more cerebral politicians of all parties.

It may also be for this reason that even left-wing theologians regarded Conservative writing on education at the time as more "Christian" in its assumptions than that of the Labour Party.

VERNON SPROXTON.
The Old Smithy, Tunstall, Richmond, North Yorkshire.

Universities and History

Sir, — Much as I enjoyed T. J. Reed's eloquent and forceful defence of the university ethos (March 13), I was disappointed that he developed it at the expense of reviewing Negley Harte's book. Mr Harte's is the first comprehensive and comprehensible survey of a complex and important institutional development. It is a rare example of a thoroughly researched book (with an excellent bibliography for those who wish to go further and deeper) that maintains high standards of scholarship and yet may be read with profit by student and general reader alike.

A further point needs to be made. The historian is involved constantly in the interpretation of a personally selected past. He cannot therefore be objective in the strict sense of the word. But we all have our own standards of conceptual hygiene. There are few historians, no matter how strong their feelings, who feel it appropriate to wage contemporary political

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

- Alain Berman is Professor at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. His books include *The Intellectual Origins of Leninism*, 1981.
- Richard Davenport-Hines was joint winner in 1985 of the Wolfson Prize for his biography *Dudley Docker: The life and times of a trade warrior*.
- Peter Davidson is the editor of *Songs of the British Music Hall*, 1972.
- William Dean's most recent book is *The New Grove Handel*, which appeared in 1982.
- Tim Dooley's first collection of poems, *The Interrupted Dream: Poems 1971-1984*, was published in 1985.
- John B. Dunlop is Senior Fellow and Associate Director of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University. His latest book, *The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism*, was published in 1984.
- Ray Faller's most recent collection of poems, *Consolations*, has just been published.
- Ruth Haughian is a lecturer in English at the University of York.
- Jack Hayward is Professor of Politics at the University of Hull, and author of *The State and the Market Economy*, 1985.
- Gree Jantzen is a lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion at King's College London, and author of *God's World, God's Body*, 1984.
- Nicholas Kenyon is a music critic of the *Observer*.
- Rhonda Koenig is the literary editor of *New York magazine*.
- Eric Korn is an antiquarian bookseller in London.
- Angela Leighton's books include *Shelley and the Sublime: An interpretation of the major poems*, 1984.
- William Logan's collection of poems, *Difficulty*, was published in 1984.
- John Lubbock is a lecturer in the History of Art at the University of Essex.
- Chaire Makin writes for the *Institutional Investor*.
- David Nokes's book *Jonathan Swift: A hypocrite reversed* was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for the best biographical work published in 1985.
- David Papineau's *Reality and Representation* will be published later this year.
- John Potter is drama critic of the *Sunday Times*. His book *Vladimir's Carrot: Modern drama and the modern imagination* will be published in May.
- Lois Potter is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Leicester. She is General Editor of Volumes One and Four of the *Revels History of Drama in English*.
- Martin Price is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. His *The Tories and the People, 1880-1935* was published in 1985.
- Peter Quennell's lectures in Commonwealth Arts at Exeter University. His *Diversity Itself: Essays in Australian arts and culture* has just been published.
- Alan Rice is Director of Studies, Southwark Ordination Course. His *Christians and Religious Pluralism* was published in 1983.
- Peter Redgrove's *The Mudlark Poems and Grand Bazaar* was published in January.
- Paul Rogers is the editor of *The New Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature*, which will be published shortly.
- John Russell is the author of *The Opera Industry in Italy from Cimarosa to Verdi: The role of the impresario*, 1984.
- Paul Scarlight is a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge.
- Barry Shapiro is Professor of Economic History at the University of Cambridge. He is the editor of *The Experience of Economic History*, 1983.
- John Shepherd is Visiting Professor in the Division of Humanities, California Institute of Technology. His most recent book is *Offensive Literature*, 1982.
- R. S. Sutherland's books include *An ABC of Nostalgia*, which was published in 1984.
- Stephen Yellin recently retired from the Chair of Philosophy at King's College London, and is now teaching at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign.

John Cornford

Sir, — Reg Snell (Letters, March 13) points out correctly that John Cornford could have found the phrase "heart of the heartless world" in Auden rather than in Marx. Cornford was a scholar of Marx, and would have recognized that Auden had taken the words from one of Marx's most famous pronouncements: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people." (Auden's use of Marx's phrase — for ironic purposes very different from Cornford's — is discussed briefly in a book I wrote called *Early Auden*.)

My review, incidentally (January 16), seems to have misled some readers about its sympathies, so one further point may be worth making. There is a real connection between the merits of a cause and the art it inspires. The Spanish Republic inspired, in addition to trash, masterpieces of hope, doubt, and anguish. Franco inspired nothing but trash.

EDWARD MENDELSON.
Department of English, Columbia University,
New York, NY 10027.

'To the Land of the Reeds'

Sir, — May one suggest that reviews of translated works should mention the language they have been translated from? I refer to the interesting review by Gabriel Josipovici of Aharon Appelfeld's *To the Land of the Reeds* (February 27).

There, too, it would have been of interest to know what language the novel was supposed to have been translated into. Of the many infelicities (to use no harsher word) in the quotations given from the book I cite but two: "They all stood up and shouted at once. 'It came. At last it came!'; and, in the next sentence, 'The tall man with the noble lineage . . .'"

My guess is that what they all stood up and shouted, not all at once but all together, was "It's come . . ." or, as you and I would have shouted, "Here it is at last"; and that the tall man was not the Duke of Norfolk or such but merely a personage of noble lineaments or, as you or I might have said, "with fine features". How does such stuff get published and offered to the public at a price of more than 6p per page? It is the more distressing that, buried beneath the hilarious ineptitudes of the translation as quoted by your reviewer, there evidently lies a narrative to pierce the heart.

I. M. BRUCE.
125 Oslo Court, Prince Albert Road, London NW8.

'Novel with Cocaine'

Sir, — It was interesting to see the advertisement for Tokalon skin cream which accompanied Brian Boyd's letter (March 6). Could this product have been what Ezra Pound had in mind in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*?

Even the Christian beauty Defects — after Semolhaire; We see, too, *kallos* Deceit in the market-place.

HENRY MERRITT.
21 Cyprus Road, Cambridge.

Pushkin's Drawings

Sir, — David Budgen's appreciation (Commentary, March 6) of the remarkable trilogy of animated films based on Pushkin's marginal drawings was warmly welcomed by the small circle who have so far discovered this unique work. Unfortunately he did not mention the director who conceived and executed the series over a period of six years, Andrei Khizanovsky, one of Lev Kuleshov's last students and still virtually unknown in the West — no doubt due to the double disadvantage of being a contemporary Soviet artist and an animator.

The full titles of the films are *I Fly to You in Memory, I Am with You Again and Autumn*; and connoisseurs of animation may be interested to know that three episodes in the second film were "guest animated" by Yuri Norstein. The prints shown recently at the National Film Theatre were in fact acquired by the British Film Institute for distribution sever-

al years ago, but have not yet been subtitled or dubbed, since neither expedient seems suited to films of such visual and literary distinction. They can, however, be purchased directly from the BFI on video.

IAN CHRISTIE.
British Film Institute, 127 Charing Cross Road,
London WC2.

St Perpetua

Sir, — Mary Beard, in her brief notice of Marta Sordi's book on the Christians and the Roman Empire (February 20), evinces surprise that the single-minded young martyr St Perpetua be lauded for her "youthful exuberance" and her "love of fun". Donald Attwater, in his *Dictionary of Saints*, tells us that, while awaiting the lions, she had a dream in prison of her arrival in Heaven, during which she said, "I was merry in flesh: now I am merrier still". She and the other martyrs also entered the arena "with gay and gallant looks", so that Sordi would seem to be right.

Incidentally, the saint's name is familiar to Italian cars as being that of Don Abbondio's servant in *I Promessi Sposi*: hence, by antonomasia, *una perpetua* now means a priest's housekeeper.

FREDERICK HURDIS-JONES.
S Eufemia 681/A, Venice.

Church and Politics in Brazil

Sir, — David Lehmann's review of Scott Mainwaring's *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916-1985* (February 20) gives a good general view of the intersection of religion and politics in Brazilian life. But it calls for one factual correction when it refers to "that peculiar combination of torture, economic growth and deepening social inequality which made up what has come to be known as Brazil's *capitalismo selvagem* (savage capitalism)" and goes on to say that "it is said that Delfim Netto, the Planning Minister, coined the phrase".

The phrase was not coined by Delfim Netto. It was coined against him in 1980 by Carlos Rischbieter, then Minister of Finance, who protested because Delfim Netto was, in fact, busy building our monetary savage capitalism. Gradually but firmly, Delfim Netto led us towards a place in the *Guinness Book of Records* with a foreign debt of US\$100 billion.

I haven't read Mainwaring's book but agree with the reviewer that it would be a pity if it really omitted "any analysis of the texts of the Popular Church". These texts frequently show the depths of what one could, for lack of a better name, call "revolutionary mysticism" in Brazil. One of them, a four-line poem by Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga, says that "In Mary's womb god was made Man, but in Joseph's shop He was made [working-] class".

ANTONIO CALLADO.
Rua Aperana 143 ap 402, Rio de Janeiro.

Terence's Plays

Sir, — Erich Segal (March 6) repeats the common assertion that "only one [of Terence's plays] found favour with Roman audiences". In fact, only one (*Heautonimorcho*) is known not to have found immediate favour with them; *Eunuchus* was an unprecedented success, and we know nothing of the fortunes of the other four at their first performances. For what it is worth, Suetonius tells us that all Terence's plays were equally popular.

P. G. McC. BROWN.
Trinity College, Oxford.

The UK publication of Arthur M. Schlesinger's *The Cycles of American History* (TLS, March 13) has been postponed until April 30. We regret any inconvenience our early review may cause to British readers and booksellers.

The title of the volume edited by Christopher Norton and David Park, reviewed by Giles Constable in last week's *TLS*, was inaccurately given: it is *Cistercian Art and Architecture in the British Isles*. Also, in that review, a quotation from Richard Halsey's article in the book should have referred to Rievaulx as an "Anglo-Norman Romanesque church".

Johns Hopkins: Imagining the Self

THE HOUSE OF DEATH

Messages from the English Renaissance

Arnold Stein

"An unusually moving and satisfying work. It constantly reminded me of the essential relationship of knowledge and acuteness to wisdom." — John Hollander

Arnold Stein offers a magisterial study of the ways in which English poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries imagined their own ends and wrote of the actual deaths of those they loved or wished to honor. *The House of Death*, writes Stein, conveys "the 'messages' of individual poets as they express and renew some of our best knowledge and self-knowledge." £22.40

CANNIBALS, WITCHES, AND DIVORCE

Estranging the Renaissance

Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1985

New Series, no. 11

Edited by Marjorie Garber

When we speak of the English Renaissance, what is it that we are naming, what are we recognizing as reborn? Seven leading critics here defamiliarize the images of the Renaissance "to permit the repressed to return, to acknowledge the presence of the unsimilable ghost, the mark of difference of an age that is at once self and 'other.'" The contributors are Janet Adelman, Marjorie Garber, John Hollander, Steven Mullany, Mory Nyquist, Stephen Orgel, and Patricia Parker. £15.30

BEAUTIFUL FABLES

Self-consciousness in Italian Narrative from Manzoni to Calvino

Gregory L. Lucente

Does self-consciousness create a disturbance in the narrative text or does it provide a solution? In the first full-length study of literary self-consciousness in Italian narrative, Gregory Lucente explores the many theoretical dimensions of this question and discusses texts ranging from Manzoni's *I Promessi Sposi* through the recent fiction of Calvino and Eco. £25.55

THE JOHN'S HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS
c/o Trevor Brown Associates, Suite 7, 26 Charing Cross Road, London WC2N 0LN

COMMENTARY

Changing our cities and our lives

Jules Lubbock

Le Corbusier: Architect of the Century
Hayward Gallery, until June 7

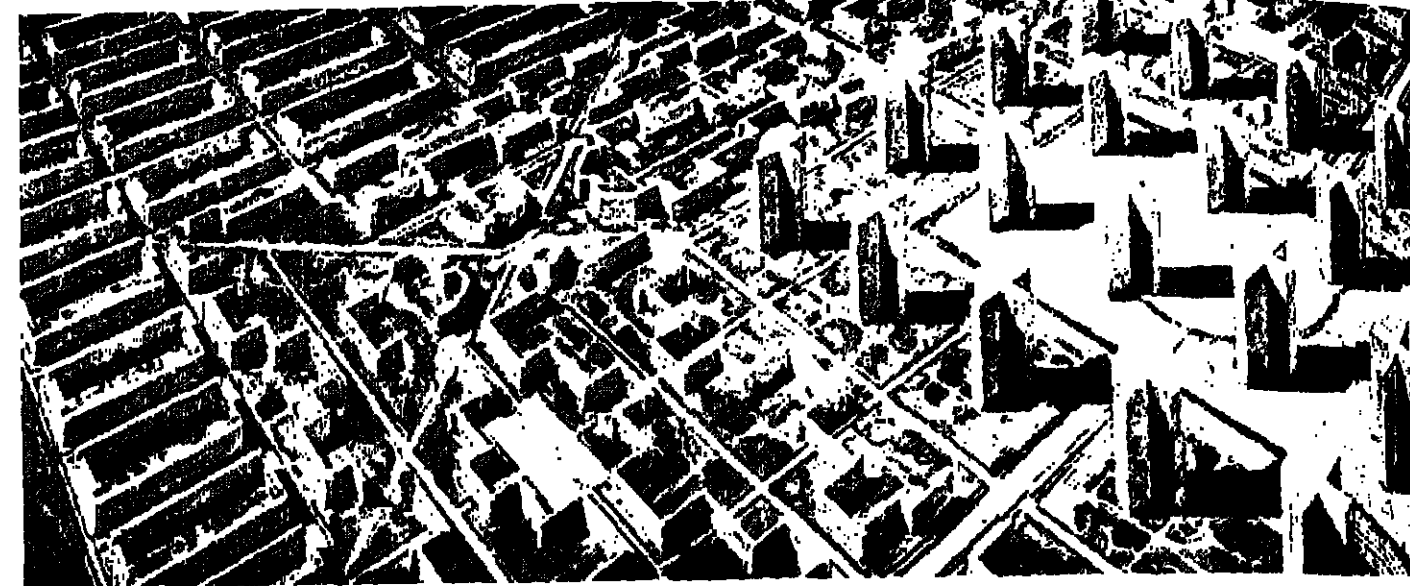
"The wrong exhibition, at the wrong time, in the wrong place", grunted one influential *artistic* *elegantiarum* at the private view. The only justifications for spending such large sums of public money as this kind of project involves would be a thorough reevaluation of the work, or to stir up a controversy, which is far better done on television. The present exhibition does neither; nor did it prove popular with commercial sponsors.

Central to our assessment of Le Corbusier are his theories of town-planning, without which he would be just another twentieth-century architect; hardly "Architect of the Century". Yet we have to pass through three of the six sections of the exhibition before we reach one called "Urbanism". The preceding sections cover: six private houses; painting, sculpture and domestic furniture; and his monumental projects. The impression given is that Le Corbusier was primarily an artist who happened also to be the designer of elegant domestic pavilions and some stylish chromium furniture. While I did not measure the floor space given to planning, it seemed similar to that given to the three chromium chairs of the 1920s. Moreover, Urbanism, which consists largely of geometrical plan drawings, is tucked away in a corner of the area devoted to Le Corbusier's jolly and colourful late sculpture and the life-size reconstructions of bits of Ronchamp and La Tourette, the formalistic late works. It would be easy for the majority of visitors to miss planning altogether, and were it not for the admirable essay on the subject by Tim and Charlotte Beaton in the catalogue, one would be inclined to accuse the organizers of bad faith in underplaying so major an aspect.

An introductory display panel promises that the exhibition will deal not only with Le Corbusier's art and his architecture but also with "the ideas which, in the century since his birth, have changed our cities and our lives". And this it patently fails to do. Yet it was those ideas that made him so influential a figure, particularly for young British architects who came under the influence of his epigones. For them, Le Corbusier offered a vision of the power an architect-planner might wield over every aspect of life from boiling an egg to founding new cities - this for a profession which only achieved statutory control on entry in 1938.

When the visitor arrives at the town planning section, the organizers seem to be endorsing the popular criticisms. Le Corbusier's "Plan Voisin" for Paris was launched as a great panorama in the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau at the 1925 Paris Expo; it proposed the demolition of the whole of the area between the Rue de Rivoli and Boulevard Haussmann, including the Marais, and its replacement with eighteen skyscrapers 600 feet high as a general business headquarters. It was originally intended to reconstruct this panorama at the start of the exhibition; regrettably, it is now displayed by a few plans only. A panel informs us that it was "most shocking. Much of the historic but dilapidated and insanitary area to the north of the Île de la Cité would have been bulldozed." But we are also led to believe that "by the 1930s, as Le Corbusier's urbanistic research deepened and acquired cultural richness its underlying humanism became increasingly apparent", particularly in the *Ville Radieuse* of 1935. We are not, however, given any evidence of this humanism.

The catalogue essays, on the other hand, do face up to the issue. The key point to emerge is that after the 1920s, in violent reaction to his pre-war conservationist ideas, discussed in the still unpublished *La Construction des Villes* of 1910, Le Corbusier adopted a ruthless attitude towards the fabric of towns and cities: all but a few historic monuments should be razed to the ground to benefit the motor car. It hardly matters whether the underlying plan was the rectilinear grid of the Plan Voisin or the more organic "meanders" of the 1930s. His attitude to the inhabitants was similarly absolutist; in his 1925 plan there were no "representative democratic



The model of the century of "a contemporary city", an illustration from Le Corbusier's *Urbanisme* (1924). John Rodker's translation published in 1929. The City of Tomorrow and its Planning, has recently been reissued with a new introduction by the Architectural Press (301pp. Paperback, £9.50. 0 85139 124 9) in a uniform edition with Le Corbusier's *The Decorative Art of Today* (1925) and *Towards an Architecture* (1923).

institutions", while his Obus plan for Algiers can be seen as "an act of appropriation... The word 'Obus' meaning 'shell', while intended to indicate the explosive potential of the project (bombshell), had unmistakable militaristic connotations in line with much colonial discourse of the period". All these ideas are, needless to say, extremely unpopular in the present climate, but an exhibition of this kind should give us the material with which to make our own judgments.

To shift the focus from these projects, as the exhibition does, to the more organic forms of "masterpiece" like Ronchamp is misleading in that it treats as aesthetic objects buildings intended as the monumental symbols of the tech-

nocracy which might have brought the great urban schemes into existence, but which, with the exception of Chandigarh, failed to do so. The catalogue essay on Chandigarh, a finely balanced assessment by the young Indian architect Sunand Prasad, is infinitely more informative than the exhibition.

Chandigarh, capital of Punjab, inevitably draws the comparison with New Delhi and hence with the Lutyens exhibition of 1981, a show which was far better designed and which succeeded in conveying a real experience of Lutyens's architecture. The Lutyens exhibition, however, was even more misleading in its almost total suppression, in the catalogue as well as the lay-out, of the architect's monstrous

essays in town planning, such as his *Red Academy plan for London* of 1942, which resembles Albert Speer's plans for Berlin. Lutyens conceived of a post-war London covered with processional routes for the King-Emperor, and of Southwark cleared for a major London airport.

It did not suit the organizers of the earlier exhibition to draw attention to Lutyens's megalomaniac affinity with Le Corbusier, the very architect whose theories Lutyens's admirers wished to supplant. My response to both exhibitions is to ask why the Arts Council allow itself to be used in this way by rival architectural factions as a platform for distorted representations of their heroes?

Revolution and rescue

Winton Dean

LUIGI CHERUBINI
The Water Carrier
Jeannetta Cochrane Theatre

Thanks largely to Berlioz's memoirs, Cherubini has gone down to history as a monumental pedant. This may be true of his later years, when his music and his personality grew progressively drier, but the vitality of his opera during the Revolutionary decade 1790-1800 goes far towards explaining Beethoven's estimate of him as the greatest composer of the age. Certainly his influence, not only on Beethoven but on Weber, Spohr, Schubert and other German Romantics, was profound. Yet his operas are seldom performed. *Médée* (1797), occasionally revived for Callas or some other prima donna, is given in a bastard version with recitatives by Franz Lachner dating from 1855; for *Lodoiska* (1791) and *Les deux Journées* (The Water Carrier, 1800) we have to rely on rare productions by fringe groups.

One obstacle is the *opéra-comique* form to which they belong: that is, the set pieces are joined (or separated) by spoken dialogue, not recitative. This is considered suitable for light comedy and operetta, but not for serious subjects: even the greatest of later *opéras-comiques*, *Carmen*, was for long clogged by alien recitatives. The "rescue" operas of the 1790s are intensely serious, much more so than contemporary grand operas, reflecting as they do the humanitarian ideals of the Revolution and exalting the heroic qualities of the man and woman in the street. The spoken dialogue was part of their appeal to the wider new audience, since it preserved the element of realism and the link with the common man, for whom recitative was seen as a stilted and unnatural means of expression.

The one opera of this class in the regular repertoire (with the possible exception of *Der Freischütz*) is Beethoven's *Fidelio*, which was partly modelled on *Les deux Journées*. Both had librettos by J. N. Bouilly (Beethoven's had been set by Gaveaux for Paris in 1798), with plots allegedly based on real events during the Reign of Terror, though for technical reasons they were shifted in time or place. They share a

strong ideological content, a setting that begins in a domestic circle before expanding to embrace universal issues, and even a second soprano called Marcellina. Both make impressive use of *melodrama* as an occasional link between speech and extended ensembles, and end with a political *deus ex machina* after the characters have been subjected to ordeals that must have vividly recalled to the original audiences the desperate events of only a few years earlier. In one respect Cherubini's opera is even more striking than Beethoven's: the married couple rescued by the humble water-carrier and his family are aristocrats threatened by revolution - and this within six years of the Terror.

None of this would be significant without the intense commitment of Cherubini's score, strongly realized in the Morley Opera production. It combines an impeccable technique derived from Mozart and Cimarosa with the relaxed melody of Grétry and strokes of imagination, especially in harmonic control, that look to mature Beethoven. Cherubini animates not only the individual characters but the clash

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 321

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than April 10. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 321" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on April 17.

1 I saw you once, boyman, lean by your punt-pole
On an Oxford river, in the dubious light
Between willow and water.

2 This is the one song everyone
would like to learn: the song that is irresistible
the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see the beached skulls.

3 Now pass I to the final river
agonizingly like a hawk, without sound,
As my peeping Turk to the Bosphorus.

Competition No 316

Winner: Janet Adam Smith

Answers:

1 High and solemn mountains guard Rionscourt.
Small untidy village where the river drives a mill.
Prall as wood anemones, white and frail were you.
And drooping a little, like the splendid daffodil.
James Elroy Flecker, "Rionscourt".

2 I have gone in Ribeyrac
and in Scarlat,
I have climbed rickety stairs, heard talk of Coy,
Walked over En Bertran's old layout,
Fell as wood anemones, white and frail were you.
Have seen Excideuil, carefully fashioned.
Ezra Pound, "Provincia Deserta".

3 "Fall chaud", as each old woman said,
going over the hill, in Périgord,
prim in tight bonnets, worn black dresses, and
with the lift of sunlight in their bonnets.
Michael Roberts, "Hymn to the Sun".

Music in the service of man

Nicholas Kenyon

SEAMUS FINNEGAN
Ghetto
Riverside Studios

Where does a composer's inspiration come from? *Amadeus* reinforced a fashionable erroneous polarization between the voice of God and the voice of mediocrity. Seamus Finnegan's new play adds a twist to the problem of divine inspiration: what young Solomon Moresco wants to know is whether his music is inspired by the God of the Jews or the God of the Christians. He is a composer in the Jewish ghetto of sixteenth-century Venice who does a little moonlighting for the opposition and has written some particularly fetching Holy Week music for the Roman Catholic liturgy.

Moresco is perhaps loosely based on the composer Salamone Rossi, a late sixteenth-century Mantuan who was active in the service of the Gonzaga court (though probably never, as Iain Fenlon has stressed, an official member of its musical establishment), while writing some powerful and affecting Jewish ritual music including psalms, hymns and songs for the synagogue. But there is no evidence at all that Rossi wrote any sacred music for the Catholic liturgy, and the whole notion is improbable: it would have required a spiritual schizophrenia rather deeper than, say, that of the composers who wrote for successive Protestant and Catholic liturgies in post-Reformation England.

This is not the only improbable element in Finnegan's play. The ghetto here is violently enforced, though it is now thought that it was more flexible and even (as one historian suggests) not much less humane than the herding together of foreign Christian merchants.

Whatever the truth of that matter, Finnegan's premise is promising: both the composer, with his artistic inspiration, and his sister, in love with a Christian, try in their own ways to cross the barriers of prejudice. There seems to be initial tacit support from their father, who regularly taunts the ghetto rules by taking books to the Christians, and from Father Rocca, the sinister priest who encourages Solomon's composition.

But underneath their bending of the barriers, real prejudice runs strong and deep. It then unhelpfully emerges that Giorgio, who courts the Jewish daughter, is an unpleasant piece of work, while Solomon, the only articulate one among them all, is killed by a couple of overactive Christian guards half way through the evening. There is doubtless meant to be something of significance here for our present problems of separation and religious apartheid - presumably Ireland is closer to Finnegan's mind than the Middle East or South Africa, though any would do. Unfortunately, Finnegan's plot disintegrates and the language with which he conjures up sixteenth-century Venice is a banal period pastiche which removes any vestige of interest from the characters' dilemmas.

This is the more regrettable because it means that neither Janey Gardiner's attractively massive, washy, impressionistic set hangings nor the occasionally perceptive direction of Julia Pascal stands anything of a chance of bringing Venice to life. There is no absorption of detail, no conviction to the speech and very little, (apart from Paul Rhy's haunted Solomon) to the acting. Some of Rossi's music is well used, in between atmospheric contemporary plunkings by Kyle Greenbaum, but there is never a moment which grabs the audience by the throat - and whatever you thought of *Amadeus*, it certainly achieved that - and makes you realize what it feels like to compose.

The anthology approach

David Nokes

Arena: Andrei Tarkovsky
BBC2

As a tribute to the career of Andrei Tarkovsky this Arena programme seemed deliberately muted in tone, offering us an anthology of film clips linked only by a sparse biographical narrative. Taking its cue from Tarkovsky's remark that his films should be experienced like pieces of music rather than interpreted literally, the programme shied away from any kind of analysis, relying instead on the juxtaposition of images to suggest themes and motifs. The occasional spatter of descriptive terms - poetic, visionary, prophetic, dreamlike - were like adjectival apologies for the poverty of language to account for the iconic radiance and mystery of his images. Through the programme the sole voice chosen to comment on the films was Tarkovsky's own, in a hesitant, often laconic but always intense series of meditations on the enigmatic power of film. He described his own films as "a blind search for points of contact with poetry" and a quest for spiritual essence. He took issue with the science fiction label attached to such films as *Solaris* and *Stalker*, preferring to describe them as parables. "Art is the direct result of an ill-designed world", he declared. The ability of art to transfigure reality, so powerfully celebrated in *Andrei Rublev*, emerged as a central preoccupation.

The programme's only other interview, with Tarkovsky's widow Larisa, offered a significant difference of tone. A broad-shouldered woman, who looked as if she might have stepped down from a Monument to Industry, she spoke of the heroic courage and idealism of the actors and crew who had struggled in sub-zero temperatures to make *Andrei Rublev*. Even

when, clearly moved, she spoke of her husband's death and recalled a phrase from his diary, she sought to achieve the accuracy of an official communiqué. "I want to be precise: 'I had to become fatally ill so that I could see my son'".

Even in a programme which avoided explicit interpretation, the biographical format imposed a certain pattern and viewpoint on Tarkovsky's career. The significance of childhood, family and home were strongly presented. Tarkovsky's childhood home, a Hansel and Gretel cottage nestling amid woods, gave a particular poignancy to his final melancholy comments, from exile in Italy, about his love for his native land. *Ivan's Childhood*, *Mirror* and *Nostalgie* are all filled with images drawn from his early years. Indeed, he remarked of *Mirror* that "there is not a single scene made up" in it. The anthology approach also highlighted certain repeated images and sounds: the tinkling of glass chandeliers; the patterns of wind upon water; the burning of houses. But in its compilation of these celebrated and memorable clips, the programme inevitably lost any sense of the dramatic placing of such scenes in the slow unfolding narrative of each film. The concluding sequence of images of the little boy in a sun-hat from *Sacrifice* brought the world of childhood full circle. Such a thematic emphasis could not do full justice to the wealth of allusion and implication contained in the films, but did at least provide the programme with the satisfying sense of closure of a biographical essay.

Among the courses organized by the London Media Workshops this Spring are *Directing and Producing TV and Video Film* (March 26-7), *Writing TV Comedy* (April 28-9) and *TV Interviewing and Documentaries* (April 30). Further information is available from 101 Kings Drive, Gravesend, Kent DA12 5BQ.

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Priestly revelations

John Peter

DAVID RICHARD JONES
Great Directors at Work: Stanislavsky, Brecht, Kazan, Brook
289pp. University of California Press. £22.25.
0520 046013

The theatre director, like the orchestral conductor, is a product of Romanticism: his professional existence implies the unspoken assumption that the text is a surface under which some secret music is being played, unheeded sometimes even by the author, which it is the director's task to make audible. The relationship to the author is the crux of the matter: how the director thinks (if at all) of the audience will be determined by the way in which he relates, through the text, to the author. It could be argued, for example, that Edward Gordon Craig took far more interest in how he was going to reveal the secrets of the text than in how the revelation was going to work on an audience.

The director's function is priestly, sometimes even arcane. Some of the most interesting revelations in David Richard Jones's *Great Directors at Work* come in the section dealing with Eliu Kazan. Here is Kazan, rejecting one of Robert Anderson's suggestions during rehearsals of *Tea and Sympathy*: "No, this is the way you saw it when you were working quietly and alone. This is the way it will be." Nearly two decades later Kazan is reminiscing about his work on Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. Miller, he ponders, "deals in ethical absolutes... he is absolutely certain where he stands on issues. He is certain maybe because he is afraid of facing ambivalences, but I must not introduce ambivalences." A *Streetcar*

Named Desire prompts this reflection:

Blanche DuBois, the woman, is Williams... The interesting part of it is that Blanche DuBois-Williams is attracted to the person who's going to murder her.

This is the director as analyst. The text is treated almost like a neurotic symptom which, skillfully manipulated and expertly presented, will reveal the true nature, and motivations, of the author. And we sense, too, that it is Kazan himself, rather than the audience, who is the proper recipient of the revelation - rather like an analyst more interested in understanding a patient's complexes than in curing him.

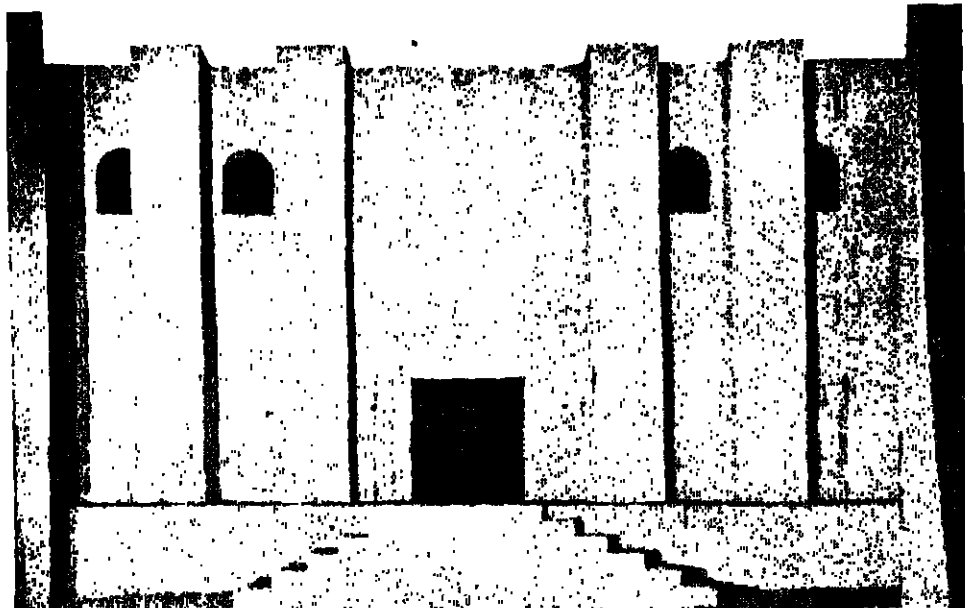
The main difference between Kazan and his spiritual grandfather Stanislavsky is that Stanislavsky clearly regarded himself as a mediator. As Dr Jones puts it, his notes on *The*

Seagull show him "successfully imagining the play". In other words, there is virtually no question here of criticizing Chekhov or his work, let alone drawing conclusions (and publishing them) as to his psychological make-up. The text is there, a literary and spiritual fact, and it has to be communicated to an audience so that both they and the author would be satisfied. The parallels with two major approaches to literary criticism need hardly be laboured. To Stanislavsky, the author was omniscient and remote. As far as Kazan was concerned, Miller and Williams were fine but they did not know the half of it.

Of course, the dividing line is not as clear as this would suggest. Even Stanislavsky made some small but outrageous cuts in *The Seagull*.

And one shortcoming of this extremely interesting book is that Jones is too ready to accept more or less uncritically (or, at best, in spirit of neutral factual enquiry) everything that Peter Brook's atrocious mutilation - so said but so crucial - of *King Lear* in his legendary 1962 production; or on the fact that despite this, and despite Brook's allegedly "Brechtian" approach, the play still came across as profoundly and unforgettable moving. We are committed to watching. Placing the poet by terms, a failure? We are not told. Nor are we told whether Jones actually saw it, or any of the four productions whose creative processes he so fascinatingly presents - though he may have seen Brecht's production of *Mother Courage and Kazan's Streetcar* in the 1950s, and Brecht's *Marat/Sade* in the 1960s. One misses, behind his intelligent and evenhanded accounts, the pressure of personal experience.

The book is organized like a set of four case books, and it encapsulates, succinctly and with remarkably little jargon, four crucial aspects in the life of modern theatre. One theme which emerges, to the point of demanding a whole book to itself, is the changing role of financial resources - involving, as they especially do, the length of time available for rehearsal. Another is the way in which the presentation and perception of character defines, and is defined by, changing dramatic styles, methods and purposes. Thus, for Stanislavsky, the people in *The Seagull* had motivations and reactions as real and as calculable as the audience's; whereas the figures in the *Marat/Sade* (one hesitates to call them people) were, by definition, created to be manipulated, unbalanced by motivations, circumstances or ideas. We are in close proximity to the art of Brecht here: an art which, as he himself said, is too proud for the force of giving and receiving.



Karl Czischka's 1908 set for *King Lear* at the Deutsches Theater. It is reproduced here from Allardyce Nichol's *The Development of the Theatre* (293pp. Harrap. 0 2458613 X).

Staging a tirade

Angela Leighton

RICHARD ALLEN CAVE (Editor)
The Romantic Theatre: An international symposium
130pp. Gollancz's Cross: Colin Smythe. £8.95.
0389 206970

"What audience will listen with any patience to a mere tirade of poetry, which stops the march of the action?" The fault Byron found with his verse tragedy, *Marino Faliero*, is one that has long been attributed to Romantic drama in general. It is too wordy to hold the stage. The Romantic poets' curious desire to write plays has thus either been shrugged off as a misapplication of their gifts, or else generalized as another form of lyricism. Yet behind Byron's lucid self-criticism, one detects an embattled and dogged sense of purpose. He continued to write verse plays in full knowledge of his audience's impatience.

The Romantic poets' largely unrequited

flirtation with the English stage is the subject of this new collection of essays on *The Romantic Theatre*. By focusing on the history of theatre, and on the specifically dramatic genre of music and Romantic writing, these four essays succeed in turning a somewhat hard-pressed subject into a fascinating and rich field of study. Both detailed and innovative, this collection offers a pointed challenge to the actual sad history of Romantic drama on stage.

The reasons for these poets' ambivalent performance as dramatists are outlined at the start in Timothy Webb's packed and suggestive essay, "The Romantic Poet and the Stage". Whether drawn by the prospect of financial reward, by the dazzling stage-presence of Keats, or the Shakespearean revival of the time, or more positively, by the political and social immediacy of theatre in an age of literary dispersal and alienation, nearly all the Romantic poets yearned, at some point in their lives, for theatrical success. Yet none of them achieved it. Webb cautiously suggests that the fault lay more with the degenerate state of

English theatre at the beginning of the nineteenth century than with the poets' own plays. The popular taste for equestrian spectacles and picturesque acting was hardly compatible with the verbal and psychological subtleties of the Romantics, whose work, he suggests, seems to have been written in direct opposition to the fashions of its day.

The proposition that Romantic drama is neither an aberration of creative effort, nor just another form of lyrical poetry, but in fact a drama ahead of its time, is forcefully championed in the remaining three essays. Giorgio Melchiori's "The Dramas of Byron" and Stuart Curran's "Shelleyan Drama" both point to the very modern sense of irony, playfulness and absurdity in the works of these two poets. Melchiori finds in Byron an "ideological commitment" and "a streak of cruelty" which make him comparable to Edward Bond. Curran intricately analyses the effects of mirroring and illusion in Shelley's plays, and draws from the dense "self-reflexiveness" of their language evidence of Shelley's cautionary dramatic pur-

pose, which is to expose political and moral illusions. Richard Allen Cave's concluding essay on "Romantic Drama in Performance" reflects on various nineteenth-century productions, and appraises recent revivals of *Marino Faliero*, *The Borderers*, *Marino Faliero* and *The Cenci*. He, too, insists on "the inner dynamic" of Romantic drama, and claims that its very lyricism serves the dramatic purpose of eventually patterning the inner soul.

This is a vigorous and illuminating collection of essays. It tends, however, in its concentration on theme and dramatic theory, to skirt the question of linguistic register. A "drake of poetry" is not necessarily in itself an obstacle to dramatic success. But a "drake of poetry" is register that is either imitatively historical or lushly lyrical may be. Whether a modern audience "will listen with any patience" to the sonant Jacobean emphases of *Marino Faliero* and *The Cenci*, for instance, or to the continuous grand cantabile of *Manfred* and *Prometheus Unbound*, is a question that has not altogether been proved.

Song and dance numberings

Peter Davison

HUBERT WILDBUHNER and SONJA VÖLKLEIN
The Musical: An international annotated bibliography
320pp. Saur. £37.
3 598 106351

It is unusual for a bibliography to throw down the gauntlet to the academic world and, at the same time, to advise professional practitioners how they might better set about their business. This is what Thomas Siedhoff does in his introduction. Given, like the book's foreword, in English and German versions, to Hubert Wildbühner and Sonja Völklein's bibliography *The Musical*. Unusual, but refreshing and not wholly unjustified. The musical has been ill-served bibliographically, he maintains, partly because of the editorial policies of American theatre publishers - "Commercial interests have little time for the serious reviewer" - and

partly because of "the negative attitude of European professors and critics toward everything that is entertainment". (The German version of "European" is more specific: "des europäischen Kontinents"). He hopes this bibliography, "free of preconceived notions" (but can it be?), will contribute to an understanding of "another - not better - theatre culture". Then he advises the "Continental European... to discard his disdain for the stage of the new world; to learn a new craft and to adopt what can usefully be applied to his own theatre art. Heady stuff for a bibliographer! The context in which Dr Siedhoff writes makes it even more surprising. This bibliography: The context in which Dr Siedhoff wrote it in 1981 at the Bavarian College for Civil Service Professionals in Munich.

The compilers concentrate on the American musical of the twentieth century, which they see as, next to jazz, the most original cultural achievement of the United States. They avoid defining the musical, except in so far as they offer a compendious second-hand definition

that takes in everything but illuminates little. It is easy to sympathize with their dilemma but something sharper in focus is essential to provide a proper context for what they have assembled. Where, for example, does George Edwards fit into their conception of musical comedy (for which "musical" is, they explain, an abbreviation)? They list Ursula Bloom's biography, a general study and a one-page newspaper article by William Archer. Gilbert and Sullivan don't seem to make an entrance, and for the showboat phenomenon they list only six items: three are newspaper articles and two are, these, Philip Graham's standard work, *Showboats* (1952), is omitted. Some attempt at definition is essential if an impression is not to be given that the lists themselves are to define the subject. Making a selection cannot be free of preconceived notions and for that reason those ought to be spelled out.

The compilers do try to do justice to predecessors to the musical. Eight sections (which include ballad opera, minstrel shows and music hall) attempt to "cover a huge field, but,

perhaps inevitably, citations on these subjects are rather sketchy. Of course, it is an engaging suggestion that ought to be included, especially for a highly selective list, that the work from the beginning. His latest collection, *Terra* (pronounced, the blurb informs us, *terror*), carries over from sequences of "Tjstian Crazy" and "Fox Running" a fascination with wanderers, exiles and outcasts. Typically, Smith's protagonists both spread error and experience it - hooligan anger cohabiting with a brilliant sense of paranoia.

This is particularly the case with Sir John Hawkwood, otherwise "Giovanni Hawkwood", the fourteenth-century English mercenary who is the central character of "Hawkwood". One of three formally varied but predominantly sombre sequences in Smith's new book. Captain of one of the "free companies" created when English soldiers were paid off after a century in the Hundred Years' War, Hawkwood becomes a *condottiere*, or contract killer, for various Italian states. A man "given to the sword", he was responsible for "a three-year butchery at Caserta" where the population was decimated then put to the sword following papal demands for "sanguis, sanguis", Smith anything?

Not at home in the house

Hugh Haughton

MICHAEL HOFMANN
Actimony
79pp. Faber. £8.95.
0571 145272

Nights in the Iron Hotel, Michael Hofmann's first collection, showed that he was a poet to watch, not least because he was so evidently committed to watching. Placing the poet by means of curiously external signs, the language of nomenclature and measurement, focusing on photographs, images on a television screen, erotic prints, close-ups of acquaintances or optical résumés of literary lives, these poems created a small museum of biographical epigrams and sociological tableaux. The new collection confirms the sharpness of his eye, and its stark title, *Actimony*, suggests its sharper emotional climate.

Like the earlier book, this is a gallery of life-studies but this time, in a way that resembles Robert Lowell's cruelly attentive portraits of himself and his family, they are strung along an explicitly autobiographical thread. In fact the book is divided into two distinct halves, the first a series of acrid vignettes of an independent life in Cambridge and London, and the second, a tart, candid sequence of poems about Hofmann's changing relationship to his German father, the writer Gert Hofmann, from early childhood to the present. Both halves, however, use the first person of autobiography and the prevailing mood as a kind of clarifying lens, not as invitations to the consolations of confession. The result is a book of poems which might easily have been something else - clinical studies, diary jottings, prose memoirs: reports investigating self and family, or documenting social and personal dereliction with something like that "scrupulous meanness" Joyce aspired to in *Dubliners*.

Like the Chekhovian short-story-teller he occasionally invokes, Hofmann seems most interested in moments when nothing much is going on, and emotions involving uncomfortable mixed dissociations. The poem called "Friction" names and describes a state basic to his world, "resistance, the hum of ohms" and a "home ground" characterized by "cageyness, stasis, ennui", here a stalemate between lovers. Throughout, he dwells on the materials of home but specializes in the moments and places he doesn't feel at home in. A street scene or country weekend, a conversation in a car or bedroom, become the equivalent of the scene of the crime in a detective story or the

site of a battle in a war-correspondent's report. In fact many of the poems read like link-passages in lost spy-stories or fragmentary domestic thrillers, the bits which register in-between states fraught with past and future history - like the opening of "Nighthawks":

Time isn't money, at our age, it's a war.
You couldn't say we cupped our hands very tightly.
We missed the second-last train, and find ourselves
at the station with half an hour to kill.

or the close of "Disturbances":
The house is breaking up, and still I'm hanging on
here:
scaffolding and a skip at the door, smells of dust
and sawdust, the trepanation of the floorboards.

These poems are vivid on moods, waiting, hanging on, killing time; they crackle with inertia and irritation. "Our silence is irksome and confrontational. / As you sit across from me, I could wish you away"; "My arms twined / as though my shirt had been the shirt of Nessus"; "your salami breath tyrannized the bedroom"; "I've spent a half-life cornered listening to you" - his own body, a lover's habits, and his father above all, flicker into these pages through their capacity to irk Hofmann into perception. He has given a new twist to the poetry of complaint by locating it so firmly in the fine tensions of domestic life.

"The house is breaking up", Hofmann's vision dwells on the impermanence of his dwellings, the unreliability and evasiveness of things, the scars of time. Worn jeans, bleached sunflowers, rusted iron, hairs on a comb, "rich stains in the lavatory bowl", a pigeon's cosy "excremental hollow" in a "ruined chipboardist's", a "moulting carpet" where he is commemorated by "coffee-stains" - these are the things which catch his eye on home ground. Outside, he has a particular interest in names, slogans, graffiti, urban decreed - signs of the "change and decay" he sees all around. He is a connoisseur of the tacky surfaces of modern city life - dogs that "vet the garbage", "old Labour slogans" like "passed deadlines", "Joy, local" in a phone-box, motor-mews and renovated precincts, kerb-crawlers in Bayswater, the writings on the wall of Mrs Thatcher's Britain. Taken together, "Albion's Market" and "From Kensal Rise to Heaven" compose a chillingly accurate tableau of contemporary London:

At night, the taxis crawled through Bayswater,
where women dangled their "most things considered" from the kerb.
A man came down the street with the meth-plink eyes
of a white rat, his gait a mortal shuffle.
A British bulldog bowler hat clung to his melting skull.

In the silent republic

Tim Dooley

KENS SMITH
Terra
90pp. Newcastle on Tyne: Bloodaxe. £4.95.
09642740

"I'll a wanderer's tale, the same / I began long ago". The opening of "Encounter at St. Mar..." catches the mood of dislocation and enunciation that has been characteristic of Ken Smith's work from the beginning. His latest collection, *Terra* (pronounced, the blurb informs us, *terror*), carries over from sequences of "Tjstian Crazy" and "Fox Running" a fascination with wanderers, exiles and outcasts. Typically, Smith's protagonists both spread error and experience it - hooligan anger cohabiting with a brilliant sense of paranoia.

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uses the figure of Hawkwood as focus for a meditation on the nature of military violence, nudging the reader's attention home too gently towards contemporary parallels:

I make war because there is no work in England
and profit from necessity.
I who have privatised war,
I have made of my life great industry.

The combination of scorn and compassion that marks the best poems in *Terra* would put one in mind of Wilfred Owen were it not for the presence of that streetwise drifter in the slouch hat, the central persona of "The London Poems" and "Ignore Previous Telegram", who is always ready to puncture any inflation with a delighted sense of absurdity. Some of Smith's targets in these poems are predictably easy: Reagan and Nancy, for example, or Mrs Thatcher as "Snooby Roberts" ("I think she's never been lived in, Mother says"). This "hero of the silent republic" speaks urgently and fluently, and is rarely afraid of repeating himself. The cumulative portrait he presents of the life of Britain's internal exiles - the unemployed, or plain ignored - is damning, depressing and accurate:

he fears skinheads
in the drains and angels in the elevator
and the number 5 bus will never come now.

Smith's generosity towards common humanity ("Each of us, each with a tale to tell") makes *Terra* a vital and provocative book, difficult to ignore.

... Game spirits, tat and service industries,
an economy stripped to the skin trade. Sex and security.

Arsenal boot boys, white slaves and the SAS.
All Hofmann's poetry thrives on loaded detail, but in a handful of poems detail bears the weight of calculated political allegory. There is at any rate a political dimension to his vision of environmental threat and dereliction. "Aerial Perspective" describes a "dog-eared, dog-rose corner" of rural England "where the picturesque collides with the strategically important" and AWACS look down on golf greens, while the sardonically titled "Eclogue" conjures a kind of "allegorical Victorian sculpture" of "Industry undressing in front of Agriculture" from a landscape where sheep browse among the ruins of nineteenth-century industry. The last poem in the book's first half, "Campaign Fever", emblematically moves out from the characteristic scene of benumbed domesticity with which it opens - where lovers compete with plants for air in "the thick vegetable breath of under the eaves" - to invoke a larger vision of waste in the public space of a Britain where Denis Thatcher "made his pile by clearing railway lines with sheep dip".

When he sold his shares, they grew neglected,
plants break out and reclaim the very pavements...
I think of you trundling across Middle England,
Peterborough, Leicester, Birmingham New Street -
the onetime marginals - up to your eyes in a vigorous,
delinquent haze of buttercups, milfoil and maple scrub.

This is as near as any of the poems comes to a moment of renovation or transcendence, but it is a vision of ambiguous marginal promise, hardly separable from despair.

"My Father's House" is a sequence of poems which add up to a double-portrait of father and son, but it too is born of decay and a sense of neglect. The poems chart the boy's changing views of his father during their intermittent relationship after divorce and the break-up of the family. Since the *Life Studies* of Hofmann's poetic father, Robert Lowell (the subject of his graduate research), modern poetry has been full of fathers and sons, family sagas and recovered childhood. Seamus Heaney, Tony Harrison, Paul Muldoon, Hugo Williams, Craig Raine and many others have led us on journeys round their respective fathers, but few have matched the tender, bitter clarity and intimate externality of Hofmann's sustained composite portrait, with its mixture of accusation and idealization. Their relationship is registered in a series of scrupulously prosaic close-ups which home in on their lack of closeness, as in the cruel detail of "Errant":

Under your eyes,
clarified by balloon spectacles, I see bleak anal
pleats.
Once, you offered me your clippings file - the human
touch!

or the epiphany from his "fugitive childhood" recalled in "Fine Adjustments":

All at once, my nature as a child hits me.
I was a moving particle, like the skidding-lights
in a film still. Provoking and of no account
I kept up a constant rearguard action, jibbing,
commenting, sermonizing. "Why did God give me a
voice."

I asked, "if you always keep the radio on?"
Perhaps the most striking thing about this memoir of his father - and indeed about the book as a whole - is this taut, sharp-eyed estimation of distance, its precision about fine misadjustments.

Hofmann has begun to develop an almost novelistic expertise in naming very particular moods and social feelings for which he finds meticulous compound labels. He speaks of the "hospitality and unease" of being a guest, of "feeling unhappy, the wrong age" while a girlfriend troops off to a family wedding "in a gaggle of tradition and collective enchantment". Studiously disenchanted, he says of a friend "asleep, motorized, tidal, you drive me to the wall", and records himself as "stuffy and centripetal" as he tags after his hosts. He finds himself "worn down by tolerance and futility". "Worn down by tolerance and futility", notices a man "with the manner of a laughing-gas victim, / rich, frightened and jovial", recalls walks with his father when he felt "taller and faster but more considerate, tense, overgrown, there on sufferance". Here is his portrait of the artist as ageing student:

I'm so fearful and indecisive, all my life

has been in education, higher and higher education

What future for the fly with his eye on the flypaper? Such compound naming of feelings is certainly not indecisive. It shows that the fly has an eye on the fly as well as the fly-paper. That is part of the higher poetic education going on in these subtly discomfiting poems of social discomfort.

Perhaps he should beware his hangover smart alienation effects and his occasionally formulaic conjunction of nominal pairs on the model of Seamus Heaney's "arithmetic and fear" (we get "anthracite and purges", "sex and security", "jokes and hard lines", and "deludedness and control"). There is, too, something fearfully constricted about these packed, curiously voiceless poems, with their resolute refusal of resonance and poetic licence. The best poems, like "Between Bed and Wastepaper Basket" or "My Father at Fifty" or "Campaign Fever", have an immaculately grubby verisimilitude but are hard to share. Though they dwell on intimate details, they establish no intimacy; leaving the reader simply an observer of their observations, a witness to their acrimonious accuracies.

If this suggests a limitation to Hofmann's abstruse craft, it is also the predicament he writes out of. More than any of the individual poems, it is the cumulative effect of the whole book, and in particular the "fastidious and disloyal" portrait of his relationship with his "individual, overwhelming, impossible father", that is impressive in its commitment to the cold climate of clearheadedness. Its very mask of hard-boiled reportage acquires a certain generosity and poignancy in its devotion to the blank, provisional, graffiti-scratched empirical world Hofmann knows. It often strikes me as surprising that he has chosen poetry as a medium at all, but perhaps this robustly individual book is the stronger for that.

On the farm

William Logan

RICHARD KENNEY
Orvery
108pp. New York: Atheneum. \$17.50
(paperback, \$10.95).
0 689 116314

Richard Kenney's first book, *The Evolution of the Flightless Bird* (1984), introduced a rich, baroque and unusual imagination, one which derived satisfaction from science and history, subjects poetry is usually content to ignore. *Orvery* is even more ambitious, the entire book being one complex instrument linking the lives on a cider-milling farm in Vermont to the stars and seasons through the small planetary apparatus, the orvery, that can wheel forwards and backwards in time, always keeping the planets in their just alignments.

The book's first section, a series of sonnets bewilderingly jammed with information, is fraught with the complications of both physics and memory. This is followed by a long sequence tracing the trajectories of farm life through the six seasons of one New England year - the four familiar ones, and two extra called Locking and Unlocking, or Hunting and Sugar. The seasons remain in their fixed order, but the individual scenes may shift from year to year, granting the annual rituals of labour an Emersonian transcendence.

The book closes with a group of riddling poems in a two-stress measure not much attempted, and not much mastered, since Auden. Kenney's verbal flourishes are usually harnessed to the work at hand, and any extravagance seems more the fault of ebullience than affection. The grand conceit, intricate and unwieldy, continually threatens, though, to overwhelm its frail rural subject. Without the complex supporting universe of actions and interactions, the individual poems read rather like a diary. The poet's genial optimism wilfully ignores the harsh or sordid aspects of farm life: the emotions of the characters, simple-hearted but not simple-minded, are unequal to the technician's vocabulary. Kenney's achievement is measured by his ambition more than his success: the book displays the gifts of intelligence and language that are his to control.

John Peter

To ask the hard question

Alice H. G. Phillips

GEORGE PLIMPTON (Editor)
Writers at Work: The "Paris Review" interviews, seventh series
 331pp. Secker and Warburg, £7.50.
 043637613 X

DJUNA BARNES
"I Could Never Be Lonely Without a Husband": Interviews
 396pp. Virago, £5.50.
 086068796 1

Samuel Johnson was interviewed; but, as John Updike points out in his introduction to the seventh volume of *Writers at Work: The "Paris Review" interviews*, only in this century has interest really developed in the person behind the authorial mask. Before, "it was generally assumed that a writer had said what he had to say in his works"; nowadays, many prefer reading about a botched life to reading the perfected work - when they read at all - and the growing class of aspiring writers wants to hear from the masters how they do it. Since the late 1950s, the *Paris Review*, under the editorship of George Plimpton, has published interviews with most of the world's outstanding writers, and many of its merely well known, writers - from T. S. Eliot to P. G. Wodehouse. Intelligently prompted, they speak about how they came to be writers and how they continue to write, with excursions into politics, philosophy and mild literary gossip.

Although in this volume Arthur Koestler (in his last interview before his death) describes his acid trip, Eugène Ionesco exposes the Collège de Pataphysique, and editor and literary historian Malcolm Cowley dispenses titbits on Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hart Crane and John Cheever, *Writers at Work* does not pander to low-level curiosity about authors' lives. Philip Roth deflects personal questions by talking about how the novelist may distort

and subvert his experiences to produce fiction. Milan Kundera agreed to a "discussion on the art of composition", to direct attention back to his books; his disembodied voice expounds for readers his "polyphonic" philosophy of the novel, with the interviewer's questions drawing him on.

Unlike most interviewees, the writers included in the *Paris Review* series are given control over the final result. Philip Larkin asked that his interview be conducted by mail, obviating direct confrontation and the tricky follow-up question; he took five months to write out his answers to the submitted list of queries. Roth and his interviewer, Hermione Lee, spent months hammering out a text from the transcripts of a day and a half of taped conversations. The writers expanded on and slashed what they had said, rearranged it entirely, shaping the written interview as they would their literary works. So doing, they also shape a public image of themselves.

Through the smooth words and the measured tones, however, the writers' personalities still show. Larkin: "If I could answer this sort of question, I'd be a professor rather than a librarian"; Ionesco: "I defend and despise success, yet I cannot do without it. I am like a drug addict - if nobody talks about me for a couple of months I have withdrawal symptoms"; Edna O'Brien: "I feel I am a cripple with the craving for wings." But the interviews, relaxed and candid as they sometimes seem, witty and engaging as they often are, must be read as formal statements and not regarded as conversational exchanges.

After spending 300 pages with thirteen minds obsessed with a single art, it is a relief to be introduced to Gabriel Deslys, a singer who turned a scandal involving herself, the King of Portugal and a wheelbarrow into lifetime celebrity, and to D. W. Griffith in one of his more frivolous moods. They are only two of the forty con artists and true artists interviewed by the novelist and poet Djuna Barnes in the

early years of the century, when both commercial culture and the avant garde were thriving. She cornered Florenz Ziegfeld and James Joyce, Montparnasse models, the all-black cast of the gospel musical *Green Pastures*, Coco Chanel, Billy Sunday, the baseball-player-turned preacher, and Mother Jones, the union organizer. Many of her subjects have slipped into obscurity, and all are now dead; editor Alyce Barry, with the help of excellent brief biographies by Douglas Messerli and Barnes's own Beardsley-influenced pen-and-ink portraits, re-animates them in this skewed volume of social history. "I *Could Never Be Lonely Without a Husband*".

Barnes began her experimental novel, the cult masterpiece *Nightwood*, the year she stopped writing for popular publications like the *New York Sun* and *Bruno's Weekly*, after eighteen years of earning her living as a journalist. Like the standard newspaper prose of the 1910s and 20s, Barnes's is highly coloured, openly opinionated, cavalier with the facts. Whereas the power in the *Writers at Work* interviews is vested in the authors interviewed, Barnes as the interviewer has the power here - even when she has had to come to get to her celebrity and, by rights, ought to be cowed. She teases, taunts, grows outrageously familiar (at least in her version of events), warning one victim, after the interview, "I'm going to write about you and I'm going to be honest. I'm going to say that you talked a lot, but didn't say anything."

Barnes had an artistic vision that was stronger than the powerful people she interviewed, and was too powerful for her in the end (for the last forty-two years of her life, she lived like a hermit in her Greenwich Village flat). She believed in perihelion, and wrote satirically and sadly about the eminently forgettable on quick-decaying newspaper. She uses the men and women she interviews much as she uses the character Dr O'Connor in *Nightwood*, ignoring

the biographical details, trapping them in shadowy settings lit by cruel flashes of light (the backstage environs of vaudeville-theatre stages lent themselves to this treatment) and making them utter her own morbid or mundanely comic sentiments:

This is a pit wherein we prove women... the first game women that make up a Hippodrome drama. Down, down they go, with head erect, down into the dark and cold, while upon the brick stands and the crows... the Adam that did not dare.

But in all this gloom, Barnes's subversive and her innovative forms and wild metaphors, her affection for the more lovable of her subjects, are hard to resist.

Barnes is a central character in the interviews, as well as the creator of others, and there she gives herself away. Before describing her first meeting with the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, years before, Barnes sketches herself as she was then, a young student clutching her art-school drawings, who had just touched the fringes of New York bohemia and was deeply impressed by its nonchalant poets and aesthetes; she also admits that she had never been in love, except with art. She loses her temper, revealing years of accumulated frustration, in the interview with Basil Ogden Stewart, who had had fantastic success as a humorist and actor without even being a victim, after the interview, "I'm going to write about you and I'm going to be honest. I'm going to say that you talked a lot, but didn't say anything."

tion is a ground-breaking book. Bainbridge's sociologist, is interested in anatomizing the subculture because he sees intimate connections between its ideologies, and the dominant ideologies of "real-world America". *Amnesia* lives its science fiction; notably - as Bainbridge points out - in the paths it dictates for an emerging technology (Space Odysseys or Star Wars?) SF is also inextricably bound into the country's most powerful cults. In the line Bainbridge has an illuminating section tracing the Church of Scientology back to the World of Null-A. Altogether, *Dimensions of Science Fiction* is one of the few books of science fiction (and even fewer books of literary sociology) worth keeping on one's shelves.

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Ex-conventional

John Sutherland

WILLIAM SIMS BAINBRIDGE
Dimensions of Science Fiction
 278pp. Harvard University Press.
 0 674 20725 4

Dimensions of Science Fiction comes at its subject from an unusual angle. William Sims Bainbridge is a sociologist. He is not, as he is at some pains to point out, an "armchair sociologist" of the squishy "structuralist" persuasion, but a hard data ethnographer. Bainbridge, this is to say, arrives at his conclusions by empirical survey and quantitative analysis. He communicates his findings most happily by graph, equation and table.

Bainbridge begins by setting up science fiction in a way that is foreign to the literary critic. The inert categories of "genre", "texts" or "canon" are given no priority. Nor does he think in terms of the conventional author-reader bond. Instead, Bainbridge pictures SF as a "subculture", a small but in itself total society comprising fans, authors, editors, reviewers, publishers. The printed works of SF function not as a literary end-product, but as one of the several means by which subculture members communicate among themselves, and with society at large. As such, SF books and magazines are important, but not necessarily more important than the tee-shirts fans wear or the bumper stickers they stick on their cars.

Having "societized" SF, Bainbridge proceeds to interrogate its personnel via questionnaire. He found his representative sample in the Iguaçu World Science Fiction Convention held in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1978. 395 participants (writers, fans, publishers, groups) responded. Initial breakdown revealed them to be 58.6 per cent male and on average twenty-five years old. They began reading SF at an average age of ten. Currently 56.2 per cent belonged to one or more SF fan clubs. And "the typical respondent said that exactly half his or her friends were SF fans".

It is, of course, likely that Bainbridge was discovering more about convention-goers than

typical readers of SF. Nevertheless, he confidently answers the answers of his 395 informants to map out the "four dimensions" of the SF world: "three of ideology and one of time". The ideological dimensions are (1) hard science, (2) new wave, (3) the fantasy cluster. The temporal dimension extends from the 1920s to 1978.

Much of Bainbridge's subsequent text is taken up with multifactorial analysis. It is rather technical and as far as I can judge scrupulous. Some of his findings (on women and SF, for instance) are enlightening. But his number crunching also delivers such banal conclusions as that Robert Heinlein is a Hard Science and Barry N. Malzberg a New Wave writer. This is about as useful as discovering that Keats is a Romantic poet.

There are, just to get them out of the way,

Strangers and afraid

Peter Quartermaine

ANTHONY J. HASSALL
Strange Country: A study of Randolph Stow
 213pp. University of Queensland Press.
 £19.95.
 0 7022 18669 9

Though subtitled *A study of Randolph Stow*, Anthony Hassall's *Strange Country* undertakes biography only where it is deemed useful for literary-critical discussions, and depends in the main on an understanding and informed reading. Stow the writer then, rather than the man, is the book's concern. Hassall argues shrewdly (a propos of Stow's preference for open-ended closure over neat "endings") that "explanations serve rather to reassure the enquirer than to disclose what actually happened". The literature is discussed as a refraction, not a reflection, of Stow's experiences, though he himself stresses that he has always aimed at "the most precise description" he could achieve of things "experienced with [his] own senses, having always been, 'except in the choice of subject-matter', a 'fantastical realist'".

Stow is a writer of exceptional and varied talents; what the 1981 *Oxford History of Australian Literature* ungenerously (and, by 1984, inaccurately) termed his "disappointingly slender achievement" is here seen as characterized by a profound and wide-ranging exploration of both the experience and the significance of alienation, "tribal, racial, urban, geographic, religious". These are themes very much of our time, for which the complex pattern of Stow's own life and inheritance, as well as his rare combination of anthropological, linguistic and literary skills, uniquely fit him.

Born in 1935 in Western Australia, and much travelled, Stow settled in 1969 in Suffolk, and moved in 1981 to Essex; both are areas from which his ancestors emigrated five generations previously. His knowledge of (for example) Aboriginal, Trobriand Island and medieval English language and lore (not to mention an intimate acquaintance with Suffolk folk-tales and the taverns of Old Harwich) variously informs his writings. And always colouring such diverse material is, as Hassall shows, a disturbingly sharp awareness that "death gives life its mystery, its awe, its poignancy".

The move from Australia to "seely Suffolk" (for which Stow feels an "atavistic" attraction) is seen by Hassall as part of Stow's lifelong search of reconciling the Australian and the ancestral elements of his heritage. He himself stresses that "the environment of a writer is as much inside" as in "what he observes", and this interior aspect of his writing casts him also as a transcriber of what Virginia Woolf termed "the things people don't say". (Stow once described a selection of poems as "mostly private letters".)

Silence is always a temptation; though he continued to write he published nothing for ten years from 1959, but his mature work overcomes what Hassall describes as a distrust of "the whole business of writing, through a craft and its manipulations", through a craft and its manipulations (described with "fantasy" in such writing, whether in the form of South Seas, as in *Visitors of Hell* (1964), which, as in *The Suburbs of Hell* (1964), Stow, like the Jacobean dramatist, admires so much, explores elements of mystery and of mortality with penetrating simplicity.

Artist of the fallen world

Gerald Mangan

JOHN FANTE
The Road to Los Angeles
 164pp. Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow
 Paperback, £8.95.
 08606558 0
Wait Until Spring, Bandini
 190pp. Panther. Paperback, £2.50.
 058606426 5
The Wine of Youth
 230pp. Paladin. Paperback, £3.50.
 058608558 0
1933 Was a Bad Year
 164pp. Black Sparrow. Paperback, £7.95.
 08606555 5
Ask the Dust
 175pp. Panther. Paperback, £2.50.
 058606424 9
Dreams from Bunker Hill
 140pp. Panther. Paperback, £2.50.
 058606425 7

I decided to eat at Jim's Place, because I still had some money. I ordered ham and eggs. While I ate, Jim talked.

He said "You read a lot. Did you ever try writing a book?"

That did it. From then on, I wanted to be a writer. "I'm writing a book right now", I said. "I wanted to know what kind of a book."

"I said 'My prose is not for sale. I write for posterity'."

John Fante was twenty-two when he gave this dry account of budding aspirations, in an early chapter of *The Road to Los Angeles* (1933), a first novel that remained unpublished until after his death in 1983. The narrator is Arturo Bandini, the endearingly vainglorious hero of the trilogy now reprinted as the Bandini Saga. *Wait Until Spring, Bandini* (1938), *Ask the Dust* (1939) and *Dreams from Bunker Hill* (1982). Reappearing under various names in the stories in *The Wine of Youth* (originally published in 1940 as *Dago Red*) and the early, undated novel *1933 Was a Bad Year*, this ubiquitous persona shares most of the given facts of Fante's own early life. The son of poor Italian-Catholic parents in small-town Colorado, whose burning ambitions lead him to the bright lights of Los Angeles, Bandini is clearly the alter ego in what amounts to a serial autobiography.

Fante seems to have sold most of his prose, after all, but posterity has been lamentably slow to evaluate it. This may be partly explained by the twenty-five years of silence that followed *Full of Life* (1952), when he was occupied by screenwriting and increasingly distressed by illness, but there is something mysterious in his complete absence from the roll-call of 1930s novelists. Like Steinbeck and Dos

passos, his roots lie very much in the working-class naturalism evolved by Sinclair Lewis's generation; but his boldly egocentric approach helps to set him apart from the more earnest sagas of the Depression, and invites closer comparison with William S. Burroughs and the early Henry Miller. As a conspicuous living exponent of the genre, Charles Bukowski contributes a reverent preface to *Ask the Dust*, linking him as a lifetime influence ("The be-

ginning of that book was a wild and enormous miracle to me"), and hinting at a story of "terrible luck, and a terrible fate" that still remains to be told.

As a young man in downtown Los Angeles, "starving and drinking and trying to be a writer", Bukowski was well placed to identify with Bandini, in the same circumstances; but Fante was evidently not encouraged to be quite as raw as Bukowski in his portrayal of them. *The Road to Los Angeles* seems to have been rejected as too "provocative" for the period, although its nearest approach to indecency is a relatively tactful treatment of the adolescent hero's sexual fantasies, and his rather more shameless confessions as a thief and liar. A shiftless casual worker, sharing a cramped flat with his mother and sister, poring over "art-model" magazines and metaphysics, and dreaming of love and fame, Bandini is an archetype of the proletarian autodidact, who has fallen under the spell of Nietzsche. Ashamed of his background and enraged by his poverty, he is bitterly scornful of all the Catholic virtues, and painfully torn between desire and contempt for women.

The story is episodic and largely unresolving, except for his eventual departure, but fortunately Fante had by then distanced himself just enough to exploit its comic potential. The delusions of grandeur lead to broad farce on his first day at a fish-cannery, when he proclaims his superiority in typically lofty style ("I'm not here permanently: I'm a writer"), and proceeds to humiliate himself by vomiting convulsively in front of the entire Filipino work-force. ("And they laughed. Oh, that writer! What a writer he was. See him writel...") The comedy is Quixotic in the truest sense, but it alternates subtly with the darker side of his megalomania - notably in the incestuous tensions that arise from his frustration, and an unforgettable scene where he wreaks gory vengeance on a colony of crabs.

His next novel - actually his debut - looked further back for a more mature view of his origins, and proved to be his masterpiece. Set in the snowbound foothills of the Rockies in Colorado, which form a permanent white backdrop to the action, *Wait Until Spring, Bandini* is a lucid and strikingly unsentimental account of a close-knit family struggling, against the odds, to survive hard times with dignity; and its most impressive achievement is the central portrait of his parents. Svevo Bandini, the peasant bricklayer from Abruzzi who can't lay bricks for the snow, dominates the landscape like a wounded bear - clearing the yard to assuage his fury, and snapping at his three unruly sons. While he gambles away his pittance in the local pool-hall, his pious wife Maria prays for his soul; and the crisis develops when her censorious mother announces an impending visit. Svevo goes on the drunk in dread of her arrival, succumbs to the allure of a rich widow, and leaves Maria to endure the mystery of his absence.

The house lost its identity now. A loose shingle whispered caustically to the wind; the electric light wires rubbed the gabled back porch, sneering. The world of inanimate things found voice, conversed with the old house, and the house chattered with

chronish delight of the discontent within its walls. The boards under her feet squealed their miserable pleas.

Bandini would not be home tonight.

A lesser novelist might have made a monster of this figure; but Fante's skilful rendering of Svevo's viewpoint, in the third person, enables us to sympathize with the volatile pride that makes his poverty all the more insufferable. His eldest son Arturo, who comes into focus only gradually, has obviously inherited enough to identify with his father's shame; and this growing mutual reflection gives the novel much of its force. In his dreams of baseball stardom, his worship of the movies, and his obstinate passion for a pretty Italian classmate, Arturo displays the same impulsive hubris that drives his father to infidelity; and when it threatens Maria's health, there is a rare poignancy in the role he assumes to reconcile them. From a wintry atmosphere of rain, instilled at school by a strong cast of nuns, the narrative moves unobtrusively towards a sense of redemption.

Fante may have been exaggerating slightly when he wrote, in the preface to the new edition, that "all of the people of my writing life, all of my characters are to be found in this early work", but it is certainly true that he re-worked the material in many different forms; several books soon merge together, as parts of a single vivid picture. The short stories give the most complete version of his Italian-Catholic roots and boyhood traumas: the terrors of hell and the joys of absolutism, the stigma of "dago" blood, and the sheer claustrophobia of the one-horse town. *1933 Was a Bad Year* is a slight but sharply-drawn account of his dogged efforts to escape a future in brick-laying, as mapped out by his father, and sign up as a pitcher for the Chicago Cubs. Poverty lends a hand in his defeat, as it does when he courts a local rich girl, but both of these escape bids are characteristically clumsy.

By the time he does light out for the territory on the Coast, literature has replaced baseball as the dream-route to riches. His eye is on the Nobel Prize more than on Hollywood, and the second and third novels of the trilogy - *Ask the Dust* and *Dreams from Bunker Hill* - complete the chronicle of his struggle in that direction. There is a large element of introspection in this adoption of the artist as hero, and it may be that writers will read the books with a more acute sense of recognition than other readers; but it is hard to think of many more entertaining versions of the familiar story. Bandini is aflame with the conviction of his genius, once again; but Fante leaves no corner of his vanity unexposed; and his quixotic quest remains grounded in the fallen world of Sancho Panza - the bartenders, waitresses, landladies and whores who cast a cold eye on his self-esteem.

Sprawled between the ocean and the desert, Los Angeles makes the perfect setting for the extremes of his own nature; and it is painted in detail, with a rare intensity of colour - the saloons and drugstores, the flea-pits and flophouses, the jails and hop-joints, the dance-halls and burlesque-shows. In a cheap hotel with flimsy walls, Bandini lives on credit and oranges, labours for weeks to describe a palm-tree, and pours out his soul in letters to the only editor who buys his fiction. In both novels the plots are subordinate to the self-portrait; but in *Ask the Dust* his main fixation is Camille, a neurotic Mexican waitress who inspires a lurid kaleidoscope of emotions - from worship to contempt, from impotence to frantic lust, from pity to a touchingly sublime resignation. When he narrowly survives an earthquake, in one of the most haunting episodes, it appears as one of the lesser upheavals of his life.

In following the pattern of his own experience so closely, Fante seems not to have displayed any great faculty for pure invention; but it is also easy to assume that little of imaginative significance occurred to him after the year of Pearl Harbor. Although *Dreams from Bunker Hill* was dictated during his final years, after he had lost his sight, it takes the same story forward only a year or so, to his first spell on a Hollywood payroll. Bandini shares a bed with an elderly landlady, and a house with a world-weary English colleague, but he is still the same callow youth at the end of it - going home on a Greyhound to his mother's pasta, and making an ass of himself at a gathering of his former social superiors.

Bandini's tireless braggadocio to the folks back home ("How can you lead such dull lives...? I swim with Johnny Weismuller; I fuck in the twilight") is comically at odds with the anguish he actually feels as an overpaid ennobled. When not lusting vainly after his secretary, or twiddling his thumbs in the studio office, he is frittering away his energies on a worthless western, so mutilated by his co-writer that he has to withdraw his credit. It's a compelling account of a common disillusionment, shared by many real writers; and its surface wryness does not distract us from the sense that it crystallizes a few decades of frustration.

All of my work, all of my thinking was so remote from the picture that it was stunning, unbelievable. As it came to an end I saw the weary patrons half-asleep in their seats, showing no pleasure at all. I was glad. It proved my integrity. I was a better man for having refused the credit, a better writer. Time would prove it. When Velda van der Zee was a forgotten name in tinsel town, the world would still reckon with Arturo Bandini.

It may be too late for Fante to appreciate it, but time does seem to be fulfilling this prediction. Bandini is a magnificent creation, and his rediscovery is not before time.



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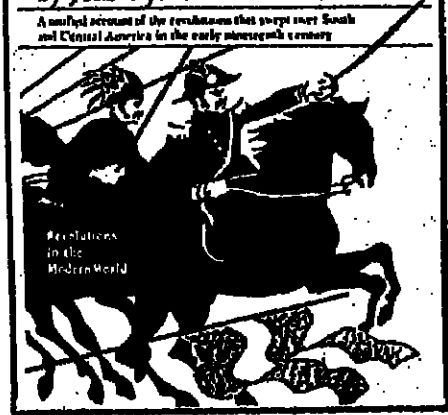
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John Fante

Eclogue and idyll

Anna Vaux

ROSEMARY HARRIS
Summers of the Wild Rose
188pp. Faber. £6.95.
0571 14702X

"Personally, I feel music overrides all differences, crosses all frontiers, and is invariably an influence for good." So speaks Nell Dobell's singing teacher, who is taking her choir to an international music competition at Innsbruck. And Nell (the choir's soloist) cannot wait to see this country of the mind, to meet Lotte Lehmann, Strauss, von Karajan. But it is 1937 and just before the Anschluss: Hitler visits the opera house; Fürtwangler conducts while jack-booted lads commit small-time atrocities; the competition itself is an occasion for political show. Like the ambivalent pastoral of its title, *Summers of the Wild Rose* is a story of innocent notions and their nightmarish evolutions, where escape from society results in political chaos. When Nell steps off the train and falls on top of and immediately in love with an Austrian Jew, Franz, the idyll she had imagined becomes a war-torn romance, and Miss Armstrong's naive words part of a larger debate about civilization itself.

If music is an ideal dimension it is so only in the way those Fairylands are whose enchanted grounds conceal dragons and other monsters. As Nell becomes increasingly aware of charmed surfaces and their sinister pitfalls, the Arcadian Austria with its peppercorn turrets turns into a gothic underworld – likened, with musical bravura, to Wagner's dragonland. On one occasion Nell goes to meet Hitler – called "Wolf" or "Wolfin" by his friends – dressed in a pink extravagance bought for her by an aged princess who refers to herself as a fairy godmother. It is a worrying parody. For, although Harris assembles all the basic properties of fairy tales and folk traditions, they are always set in the frightening realistic context of history. What merely threatens in the fairy tale is

here unable to reach a simple fictional resolution: the princess reminds Nell that wolves always gobble one in the end.

The parts of Harris's narrative arrange themselves like a nest of boxes. Stories invade other stories. Wagner's *Ring* crosses over into the triangular affair between Nell and Franz and the seductive Her Graff; *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, or the tale of Count Dracula infiltrate other scenes; and the whole, like a true eclogue, is interspersed with songs from Goethe, Schubert and Mahler. The main story itself has interrupted the book's opening tale of the grown-up Nell's niece, Clare (who, in love with a black boy and battling with her parents' prejudices, finds herself actively involved in her aunt's past), in an extended flashback. The novel is infected with the fear of invasion or interruption. Nell and Franz only spend fractured moments together and much of the narrative is spent anticipating the nearby dangers, the next step of the plot always precipitated by a threat. Just as the whole book too, waits, with controlled and effective symmetry, for the final reconciliation between Nell and Franz after thirty years apart.

The story's happy ending is the only place where Rosemary Harris allows a fairy-tale structure to override her ironic devices. But she is still reluctant to rest on a single level of events and continues to manipulate past and present when she takes Nell back to Innsbruck on a return train journey all those years after the beginning of the story. The motivation however, is realistic, and justified by the meticulous attention paid to character and historical detail. Told in the first person by the older Nell who looks analytically and seriously at her childish self, *Summers of the Wild Rose* is very much a grown-up book in disguise.

The Bodley Head has recently reissued Rosemary Sutcliffe's *The Witch's Brae* (126pp. £3.95. 0370 310020), her story of the founding of St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, which was first published in 1970.

In the realm of King Coal

Joanna Motion

ANDREW TAYLOR
The Coal House
144pp. Collins. £5.95 (£4.50, paperback).
000 1848437

Andrew Taylor's first children's book, the winner in its Whitbread Prize category, is a vote for the north. In *The Coal House* Alison Lucas, aged thirteen, is a reluctant émigré. Her father's response to the early death of his wife is to move the family, diminished to two, from Hertfordshire to the countryside near Durham. Alison exchanges her familiar school – all glass pavilions and microchip lighting consoles – for an old brick building with a bell-tower where silence falls in class when the teacher walks in. She moves away from friends and grandparents to a new set of human contacts whose accents she has to work at. To her father the north is "honest" and "cleaner". For Alison the move is evidence of her own powerlessness and another excuse for delaying at the edge of life. She finds off the charm of the big house with peeling balconies ("like *Gone with the Wind*") and chaotic garden that her father buys for the price of a Hertfordshire semi. But, despite her doubts, the Coal House, whose past is shaped by the coal-scarred landscape, draws Alison into active and partisan links with the place and its people.

For one thing, it gradually dawns on Alison that there is a miners' strike going on: she learns that a remote noise from the television News has a direct and passionate bearing on the lives of people she has become fond of. The scale of the trouble is suddenly human and personal. "Those are people's Dads!" It is the more personal to Alison because the strike is a recent, painful expression of the history that wraps around her home and its surrounding countryside. "It was as if the land had been savaged beyond support and hastily patched up, a surgery that had not quite succeeded. Topsoil and grass seed were not enough to heal the old wounds."

The presence of Alison and her father in the old pit-owners' house serves, through events as down-to-earth as the annual Leek Show and as perplexing as their night-time encounters with



"The Messenger kept skipping up and down", said Mervyn Peake's drawings for Alice in Wonderland, which can be seen at an exhibition of Peake's life work at the Royal Festival Hall, until April 12.

a shadowy visitor, to mend and soothe several lives damaged in one way or another by King Coal. The process provides her with a new set of understandings. By the end of the book Alison is no longer tempted to marvel at the care and effort invested in leek-growing or to point out that vegetables come cheaper in the shops. At the same time her relationship with her father, wary and flippant in the aftermath of her mother's death, matures into a pleasant and mutual confidence.

Andrew Taylor handles serious and somber material without overloading the book. The drama in *The Coal House* and his occasional urge to crank the tension with asides of the she-was-to-remember-the-remark-later variety are brought down to earth by humorous insights into Alison's everyday traffic with her friends and her father ("She felt rewarding noble"), and by her skirmish with the ill-headed would-be telly don who signs up a Dad's girlfriend. Taylor is plainly at home writing for children: *The Coal House* makes an exciting, thoughtful and accessible start in a genre he should continue.

Inexplicably obvious

Ann Neville Davies

MARGARET MAHY
Allens in the Family
168pp. Methuen. £7.95.
0416973604

Central to *Allens in the Family* is a belief in the truth of the child's vision which Margaret Mahy has explored in earlier works. In *The Lion in the Meadow*, the boy believes in the lion and the force of his vision is so strong that his mother is finally won over to see the world in his way: the heroine of *The Changeover* knows that the antique-shop owner Carmody Braque is destroying her brother and only by holding to this knowledge in the face of rational explanations can she save him. In *Allens in the Family*, the children, Dora, Lewis and Jacqueline (Jake), recognize and accept the rather strange boy Bond for the Alien that he is and determine to help him at all costs.

Interwoven with this theme is another of Margaret Mahy's preoccupations, the complexities of modern family life, in this case exemplified by the problems faced by Jake, who must reassess her relationship with her father, now remarried and with step-children who "belonged to him more than she did these days". Who is the Alien in the family – Bond, the boy bent through space and time from some future society, or Jake, who has only flown across New Zealand but is also an outsider when faced with the completeness of her father's new life?

It is by the interweaving of the two strands, by the impingement of the unknown and rationally inexplicable on the domestic, that harmony is reached. As time "slips sideways", the children learn to recognize each other's humanity,

"the same thoughts and feelings, the same fear, the same outrage", and Jake is able to help again the links with her father.

Typically for a Mahy book, there are no solutions at the end. Bond returns to his space environment, his test passed, to face what seems a dreary future as a "cataloguer of the universe". Jake must fly back to her unstable mother – she cannot take the place that has opened up for her in her father's family. It is the character from the nineteenth century, Sebastian Webster, who has chosen to live with the Maoris, who gains most. Caught in the "time slippage" which engulfs Bond and his would-be helpers, he proves his oneness with the Maori friends.

Margaret Mahy's use of science fiction as a means of exploring the effects of the inexplicable on everyday life is perhaps less sure than her treatment of the supernatural in earlier works – Bond's transistorized sister, for example, seems almost to have been introduced for the sake of the joke (and is on a par with the disappointingly crude dust-jacket, which is not of sympathy with the book). But even so this is an intriguing and engrossing novel. Lacking the sexual tensions of earlier books in which the central figure is an adolescent girl, *Allens in the Family* generates excitement in other ways. Bond's efforts to escape the evil Winders, the determination of his human friends to brave despite their natures, the constant sense of danger, all make for an exciting story. Although the ages of the children in the story – twelve or younger – suggest a readership of between ten and fourteen, the complexity of the introduction might floor the less able, while the care with which language is used demands close attention. For the child who meets these demands this will be a rewarding and satisfying book.

Cross-fertilization

Alan Race

KENNETH CRAGG
The Christ and the Faiths: Theology in cross-reference
360pp. SPCK. Paperback, £13.50.
0281 0422403

Something momentous is emerging in Christian theology, deriving not so much from the internal regeneration of the old agenda, as from its recasting. How are we to speak of God in a world of multiple religious choice? With that question, now forced on us both by neighbourly circumstances and by a shrinking planet, we enter a theological Alice's Wonderland, a spirit-warp, where Christian (and other) faith must forge its identity afresh.

Combining an unashamed Christian persuasion with heartfelt respect for those of differing commitments, Kenneth Cragg is better equipped than many to help us chart this new but puzzling theological space. *The Christ and the Faiths* represents the crystallization of his understanding of Christ, which has developed as the fruit of a long working experience in the Middle East (Cragg is a recognized authority in Islamic studies) and a sympathetic schooling in comparative religion.

In the uncharted space where faith encounters faith and particularity grates against particularity, we might be tempted to surrender our inherited symbolic forms and opt for a religious take-it-or-leave-it approach to God. Cragg eschews that option, feeling it does justice neither to Christ nor to the new agenda before us. Instead, he seeks to trace a non-polemical, yet critically minded path between the central symbol of Christianity, the Christ, and the respective centres of four major world traditions – Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism.

The upshot is a non-dogmatic, well-measured inclusivism: Christ fulfils and enriches the religious aspirations of others; he is the flower to their stem. Islamic prophet-hood, Jewish chosenness, Hindu universalism and Buddhist self-negation all achieve clarification, completion and correction in Christ, according to Cragg. In addition, there is a bonus for Christians: in the process of defining

Christ afresh, they will learn to let go of an offensive exclusivism that has characterized much of their past to date. The whole book is impressive for the ground it covers and the horizons to which it looks. It must be said, however, that Cragg's somewhat willfully obtuse style has every capacity for obscuring the author's main proposals.

There are problems with the Inclusive stance in a religiously plural world. One is that the fulfilment notion looks like a form of absorption, even dissolution, by a circuitous route. Cragg does not intend this and he is eirenic throughout (except perhaps in the face of Theravada Buddhism); but the stance remains unacceptably judgmental, given the nature of the environment we are now occupying. It opens the door to dialogue with one hand, and closes it with the other. A second problem is that the roles can easily be reversed, so that Christ becomes a preparation for fulfilment by other saviour figures and from other perspectives. And third, the paving-stones Cragg lays down between the Christ and the faiths owe more to his own yearning than to anything the faiths themselves might necessarily recognize.

Cragg has not gone fully into the implications of moving the centre of religious conviction away from the propositionally dogmatic to the historically more sensitive. His view of Christ has not reckoned with much recent criticism, which places Jesus firmly within first-century Judaism, and leads to the investigation of the response to him from within widely different settings thereafter. In the present pluralist setting we too can make our own variant responses to Jesus. To see him as one saviour among others, decisive for Christians and universally relevant for others, enables Christians to hold on to the particular truth of God that comes through him without prejudging truth from other places.

Further, if we accept theology as the exercise of the religious imagination, dependent on our experience and the historical/cultural conditions of any one time and place, then the sense we make of religious pluralism, as a whole, can take a different shape from Cragg's. Accepting mutual validity, the religions can together seek to construct a picture of the Divine Life appropriate to the present age.

Living with providence

Grace Jantzen

MAURICE WILES
God's Action in the World: The Bampton Lectures for 1986
118pp. SCM. Paperback, £5.95.
0334 020284

Does God act in the world? With characteristic integrity and clarity, Maurice Wiles probes the question of divine activity from the point of view of post-modern men and women. In the past, the difficulty in conceiving of God's action was located in the being of God: how could an absolutely changeless, and timeless being involve himself with this changing world? Professor Wiles suggests that our present difficulties with this concept are much more likely to arise because of our heightened awareness of history and of the ordered structure of the natural world, coupled with our inability to rely on authoritative Scripture. This generates a secular and sceptical perspective; identifying any event as an act of God becomes problematic.

Wiles argues that to speak of God as the creator is to affirm that he is the source of all being, and in that sense the cause of all events; but in that creating, he gave genuine freedom to the things he created to exist in their own right, to have natures and behaviour patterns of their own. Accordingly, the love of God for his creatures affirms them in their identities by not interfering with their workings. We can therefore speak of the act of God in creating the world and all its possibilities, but not of the acts of God within it, though his loving intention towards it never wavers.

The same applies to public and personal history, according to Wiles. God's self-limitation in creating a world in which free human beings would emerge precludes direct

divine causation or indirect manipulation of human affairs. When we see an event as providential, we respond religiously, ascribing those aspects of events which were not our own doing to the grace of God. Jesus can be taken as a manifestation of that grace, but not because of a miraculous incarnation or resurrection. Rather, we see in him total commitment to the loving intention of God.

If we take Wiles's account on its own terms, a major difficulty arises: where does the concept of divine agency get its initial purchase? If nothing that occurs in the world or in history, in Scripture, or in our lives or in the life of Jesus, is an act of God, then what basis have we for claiming that nevertheless the world is, in its totality, the realization of a divine action? The notion lacks both specificity and evidence. If there are indeed no specific acts of God, it is difficult to see how we could ever come to know that the universe is itself his unique act, or that he has loving intentions towards it. Furthermore, if God does not act, there seems little reason to suppose that even if he has a loving purpose towards the world it would ever be realized. Wiles could overcome this latter difficulty if he were willing to allow for a built-in spiritual evolution as well as a biological one; but this, besides being empirically doubtful, would undermine the notion of freedom which is central to his argument.

In practice, belief in God's action, and questions about its wider scope, arise out of specific personal experience of that which is taken as providential – in particular, encounter with the grace of God in Christ. From a post-Enlightenment point of view, such belief in God's action can be systematically challenged. But if we were to begin from the other end, from the personal encounter with God in Christ, might it not be that the challenge would go the other way, so that the secular and sceptical, post-Enlightenment, thought patterns would be found radically wanting?

THE TIMES



A diary in the grand manner

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J. H. C. Leach TLS 8th August 1986

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